

# **NW COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY**

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## ***NORTHWEST UPDATE***

**February 1, 2000**

**12. BLACK STUDENT RECEIVES DEATH THREAT, SWASTIKAS ON LOCKER:** An African American student in Ferndale, Washington found a note threatening him and two other Black students in his gym locker. Police reported that the letter contained a reference the Ku Klux Klan, lynching and warned "death is right around the corner." The note also mentioned Native American students from the Lummi Nation. The locker where the note was found had also been painted with swastikas and racial slurs. Students of color report that they have been called racist names at the school and that some white students have Confederate flags flying on their vehicles. (*Bellingham Herald*, January 27 & 28)

**13. US DISTRICT JUDGE IN YAKIMA, WA SPARKS CONTROVERSY WITH RACIAL COMMENTS:** Notes passed by U.S. District Judge Alan McDonald to courtroom workers during trials have become the focus of controversy. Many of the notes supplied to the *Spokesman-Review* contained derogatory comments aimed at ethnic groups. One note commented on Latino people in the courtroom: "It smells like oil in here - too many 'Greasers,'" said the Judge. In another note Judge McDonald, commenting on Mormons said this, "a Mormon money man makes the Jews and Chinese look like rank amateurs!" The notes were made public by a disgruntled worker who staffed McDonald's courtroom for nine years until she was fired in 1995. (*Seattle Times*, February 2)

**14. INDIAN PEOPLE'S ACTION GIVES MISSOULA SCHOOLS FAILING GRADE:** The Missoula County Public School District received an "F" in the "Racial Justice Report Card" issued by Indian People's Action. Indian People's Action promotes Native American rights and racial justice in Montana and has been trying to focus attention on the poor treatment of Indian students. Janet Robideau, Project Director for IPA, said administrators have failed to act on the high dropout rate of Indian students, the lack of Indian teachers, harassment of Indian students and the need for a curriculum that reflects Montana's diversity. (*Missoulian*, January 18)

**15. FAR RIGHT PARTY JOINS AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT:** Austria's president agreed on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, to swear in a coalition government that includes far-right Freedom Party leader, Joerg Haider. Reaction was swift. Israel recalled its ambassador and banned Haider from visiting. European Union nations started making good on threats to politically isolate Austria, something the United States has backed. The EU also warned it may suspend the nation's membership. Haider won international notoriety for statements praising Adolf Hitler's "orderly employment" policies and lauding veterans of the Waffen SS as "decent people of good character." He has also opposed EU expansion and urged a near halt to immigration. Haider will remain governor of Carinthia state but hold no Cabinet post. (Associated Press, February 3)

**16. WASHINGTON SHERIFFS REPORT HATE CRIMES DECREASE:** Reports of violent assaults against people of color decreased in 1999 according to a new study issued by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Human rights groups welcomed the news but acknowledged that the murders carried out against people of color and gays by Benjamin Smith of the Church of the Creator, Buford Furrow of the Aryan Nations, and racist Benjamin Matthew Williams has raised fears about hate crimes in many communities. It was also pointed out that some areas, such as Lane County, Oregon which has an active number of neo-Nazi skinheads, has seen hate crimes double in 1999

over the previous year. (*South County Journal*, January 17)

**17. ENROLLMENT AND BUSINESS DECLINE SINCE END OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:** One year after Washington state voters ended affirmative action university enrollment by people of color and businesses owned by women have decreased. The number of business owned by women and people of color went from 4,500 to 3,200. The University of Washington has 60 less African American freshman than in 1998, while Washington State University saw enrollment of African American freshman drop by 18 percent, this after 30 years of increasing minority enrollment. Eastern Washington University reports that enrollment of African America freshmen actually increased by two percent because of heavy recruitment. (*Spokesman Review*, January 16)

**18. HEARINGS ON SNAKE RIVER SALMON CONTINUE:** Hearings on the future of Snake River salmon runs will continue through February and March. The dates are: February 23 (Boise, Idaho); February 29 (Seattle); March 1 (Kalispell, Mont.); March 2 (Missoula, Mont.); March 7 (Idaho Falls, Idaho); March 7 (Sitka, Alaska); March 8 (Twin Falls, Idaho); March 8 (Juneau, Alaska). NWCHD encourages people to turn out at the events in support of treaty rights and to write letters to the editor in their communities in support tribal sovereignty. To receive a fax of talking points contact NWCHD at 360-756-0914.

**19. RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT CAUCUS MEETING:** The Rural Organizing Project will hold their 8<sup>th</sup> annual statewide caucus and strategy session on May 6, 2000 in Eugene, Oregon. Call 503-543-8417 to register.

**20. AMERICAN HERITAGE PARTY IN PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON:** The American Heritage Party has set up shop in Pierce County. Their address is: PO Box 8580, Tacoma, WA 98418-0580. The American Heritage Party platform calls upon the government to "oppose child adoption by homosexuals." The party also opposes "Government sponsored promotion of multiculturalism.... [and] bilingual ballots, citizenship exams, and ceremonies," and believes that "the Voting Rights Act should be repealed." (See the *Dignity Report*, Spring 1999)

**21. BETTER DEAD THAN GAY, TEACHER TELLS STUDENTS:** Students at Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon have filed a formal complaint against an instructor who told his students "You are better off dead than homosexual." Donald Epstein, an instructor of history and religious studies, made the remark in a class on Judaic studies, he later told a student that the Bible backed up his anti-gay remark. Epstein is renown on campus for his conservative views. Students are concerned that gay and lesbian students are not welcome in Epstein's classes and have asked the administration to prohibit Epstein from teaching Judaic studies in the future. (*Oregonian*, January 22)

**22. ARYAN NATIONS FLIERS IN BILLINGS, MONTANA:** Responding to a call that white supremacists were outside a theater hosting a performance by an all African American company, Billings Police found fliers placed on cars promoting the Aryan Nations. Witnesses said 8 to 10 people distributed the white supremacist flyers. (*Spokesman Review*, January 22)

\*\*\* The NWCHD 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 at the numbers listed. We rely upon such information to fill out much of the Northwest Update and we appreciate your contributions. \*\*\*