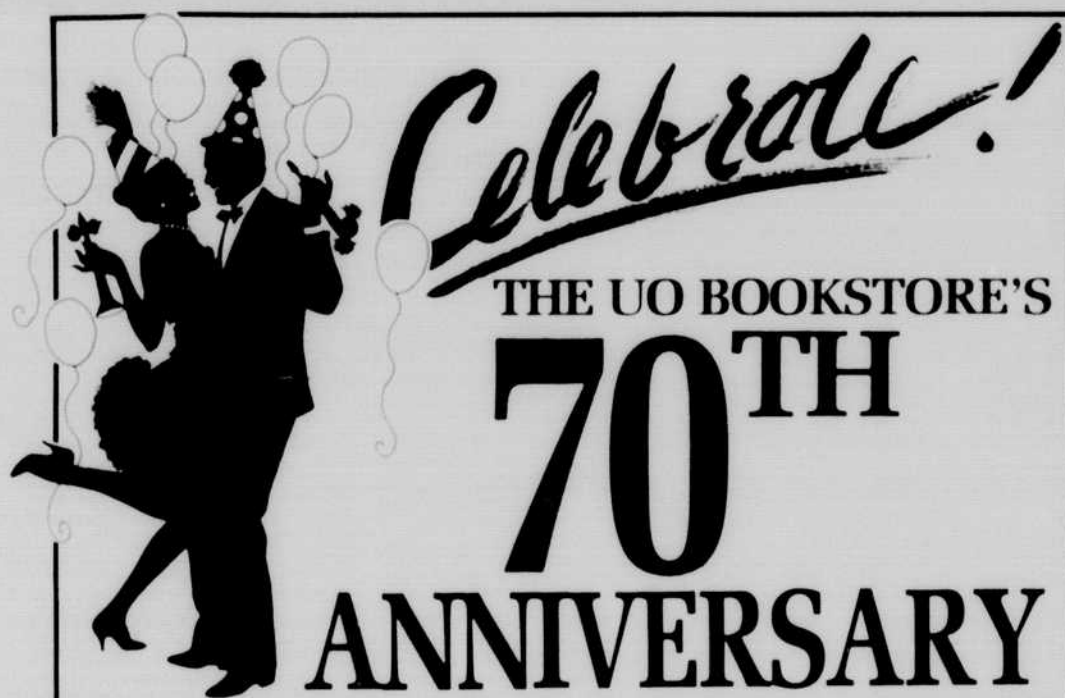




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Community

Hate crime experts talk about white supremacy

Gang coalition still worried

By Hon Walker
 Emerald Associate Editor

The Community Coalition for Youth Gang Prevention will host two regional experts on white supremacist gangs at its next public meeting tonight at 7 at the Springfield City Hall, 225 Fifth St.

Brad Rind, assistant northwest regional director of the Anti-Defamation League in Seattle, and Mitch Rice, senior trooper of the Oregon State Police in Portland, will discuss the activities of white supremacist gangs in the Northwest.

The ADL keeps records of hate crimes, particularly anti-Semitic incidents, Rind said in an interview Tuesday. White supremacist groups typically garner members from urban areas where the environment is violent and racially polarized, he said.

In addition, social pathology can make a youth receptive to "bizarre ideology," he said.

Rind said the educational efforts of groups such as the local gang prevention coalition are helpful to prepare a community for ways to respond to gang in-

in membership since it formed last May. When the group first met, Gund said, about 75 or 80 people attended.

"This was a time when we were at the formulating stage, deciding what we were going to do and how we were going to get organized," she said.

The number of people at each meeting varies from month to month, said Richard Greene, chair of the gang prevention coalition's education committee.

The first few meetings were heavily attended, but the most recent meeting on Jan. 25 drew about 35 people, although the weather was bad, he said.

Greene said the coalition is composed of committees specializing in education, business, local government and youth.

Greene said one of the reasons gangs have not established themselves locally is that people in the area are educated about youth gangs.

But Greene said white supremacist gangs may have an easier avenue for establishing themselves in the area than do

'One thing about the Aryan Nations and Skinheads is that these people like the open spaces available in Oregon.'

— Jan Gund

filtration, but police action would be needed to drive them out.

"One of the most important factors in combatting Skinhead gangs is vigorous law enforcement," Rind said. Oregon is a state with vigorous statutes to prosecute hate crime offenders, he said.

However, he added, "I don't know that there's a lot you can do about underlying social problems."

Gang prevention coalition chair Jan Gund said a key to recognizing the appearance of youth gangs, and for keeping them away, is sharing information.

Gund said the group is making an effort to educate the community about the different types of youth gangs, as well as the juvenile justice system.

"We want people to be as well-informed about what's going on in the community as possible," she said.

What's going on in the community, however, is not much, as far as actual gang presence is concerned. The coalition formed after a number of racially-motivated hate crimes were reported last winter, but the only indications of gang activity have been sporadic graffiti and individuals with gang affiliations.

In November, a court injunction barred an 18-year-old alleged gang member from the Eugene School District. There have been no documented gang-related crimes in Eugene.

The gang prevention coalition has seen a gradual decline

drug-oriented gangs.

Oregon's wide, rural areas have a history of attracting groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, he said.

Gund said, "One thing about the Aryan Nations and Skinheads is that these people like the open spaces available in Oregon."

Moreover, the type of illicit drug trafficking in the area is another factor discouraging youth gangs from setting up here, Greene said.

Though Eugene is a big market for methamphetamine — the "wrong drug" for youth gangs, he said — such drugs as crack cocaine are not as common here.

Greene said the white supremacist Aryan Nations compound has eyed Coos and Lane counties for future recruiting activity.

"Although we haven't had a lot of action in Eugene, this is a targeted area," he said.

Greene stressed the need to prevent such groups from moving to Eugene. Two years ago, he said, Tacoma, Wash. was in a similar situation, with isolated signs of gang activity but no documented presence.

Now, Tacoma is riddled with youth gangs, he said. "Eugene is in a privileged position" to get rid of the problem before it starts, he said.

"Once they're there, once they've got a foothold in the community, there's no turning back. You're fighting a losing battle."

Thursday, February 22, 1990