

Hate strikes

The Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon's office is burglarized and vandalized, the HIV Day Center is burglarized and ransacked and a burglary attempt at the Just Out office is bungled

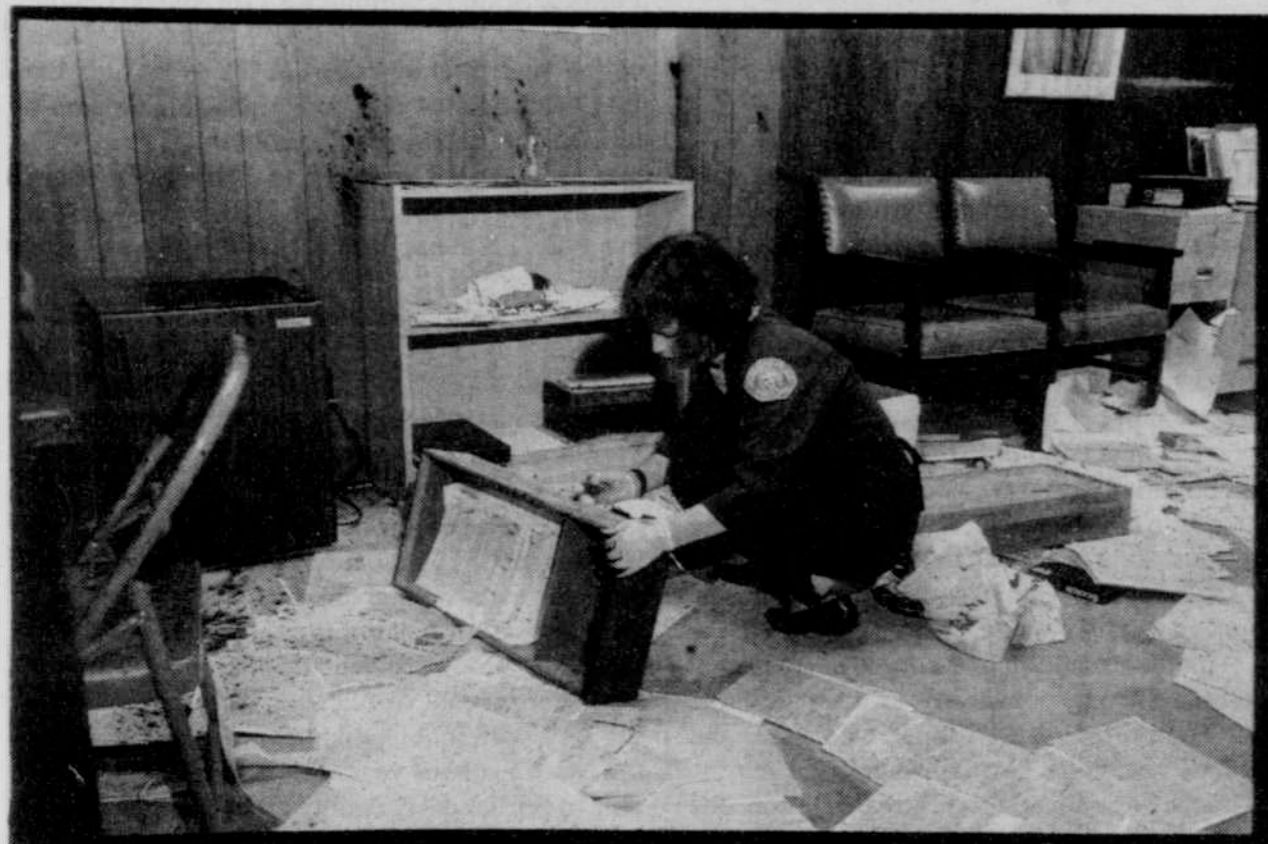


PHOTO BY ELLEN HANSEN

Mary Brandon, Portland Police Bureau criminalist dusts for prints at the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon office after the June 8 break-in.

by Ellen Hansen

When Kimberly Webster arrived at the office of the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon June 9 at 7:30 am, the first thing she noticed was the broken window of the front door. "I went in and listened, to see if there was anyone in there." She went down the hall and looked in the offices. "There was all this black stuff on the floor. I wondered if it would ignite." She ran across the street and called 911. Police officers quickly arrived at 1847 E. Burnside. They determined that the offices had been ransacked, a lot of expensive office equipment stolen, and then as a parting gesture, toner

(the black stuff) from the Xerox machine was tossed throughout the offices.

Office equipment taken included a 486 IBM-clone computer with laser printer, Okidata 390L printer, a second IBM-clone computer, a Macintosh printer, two telephones and the fax machine. The computers' data banks had donor and supporter lists on them. "It's almost as if anything that would help us keep in touch with the outside world and our supporters—that's gone," said Webster.

By 9:42 am Portland Police Bureau Criminalist Mary Brandon was dusting for fingerprints and taking photographs. "I normally don't take pho-

tographs, [at an office burglary] except that this one is so unusual—the destruction, the vandalism. This is more than the standard office burglary. This is personal, in my opinion."

Also taken were background files on the OCA, a personal address book, a rolodex, the No On Eight archive files and insurance papers. The campaign's album of press clippings was strewn about and stomped on.

The police have classified the break-in as a bias crime. "We're taking this very seriously," said Detective C.W. Jensen of the Bias Crime Unit. "We've contacted Crime Stoppers, who've agreed to help. We want to get this visible."

The campaign and the police are concerned about the fate of the donor lists, and are encouraging anyone who receives any hate mail or phone calls to report them to the police. "Especially if anyone starts getting calls or letters out of the blue," says Det. Jensen. To report a bias crime, call 911 if it is an emergency, 230-2121 for non-emergency calls. "If people have any questions, they can call us at the Bias Crime Unit," according to Jensen. That number is 796-3466.

"The police do not yet know who committed this crime," according to Peggy Norman, campaign manager. "We hold the Oregon Citizens Alliance personally responsible for spreading a climate of hate in which these crimes can flourish," she declared.

The campaign has decided to become more visible than before, and has a new headquarters at 4424 NE Glisan, where they've taken "significant security measures" according to Webster.

"The whole point; whether the computers are missing, whether toner was thrown everywhere, the bottom line was to get at us emotionally, to demoralize us, to slow us down..." stated Kathleen Saadat a CHFO steering committee member. "We are committed, we are determined. There are lots of us who are committed, who are determined and we will not let go."

The Campaign is offering a \$1,000 reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators of this crime.

Burglary of Just Out office bungled

On June 9, the night following the break in of CHFO's office, the building housing the Just Out office was broken into. The office directly below Just Out's was opened with a crow bar. An IBM computer was partially dismantled, then the vandals left. It is thought by Det. Jensen of the Bias Crime Unit that the break in was a bungled attempt to vandalize Just Out's offices.

"I have no doubt that the Oregon Citizens Alliance is indirectly involved. At the very least the OCA is fostering an atmosphere of hate and bigotry and giving people permission to perpetrate these hate crimes," says Just Out publisher Renée LaChance. "We're on guard every minute now. We're scared to be in the office at night, and we hesitate when someone asks for our address over the phone. We assume they will try again, so we are taking every precaution to be secure."

Future of HIV Day Center threatened

On June 22, the HIV Day Center was broken into, ransacked and burglarized. The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon established the Center in 1990 to serve the needs of people living with HIV disease. Officials of EMO, staff and clients of the Center say they are stunned and afraid.

"In a world of discrimination and hatred, the clients of the HIV Day Center take the safety they experience at the Center seriously," says Tina Tommaso Jennings. "[The break-in] has eroded their confidence and created pain, suspicion and fear."

EMO faces a \$60,000 mortgage payment on the Center in August, and the break-in has totally disrupted its fundraising efforts. "Meeting this obligation looks bleak," says the Rev. Rodney Page, executive director of EMO.

The thieves stole a stereo, video cassette recorder, \$250 in petty cash and dismantled a computer and abandoned it. They also took the rolodexes, and dumped all the drawers and files on the floor.

The Center needs friends to clean-up, repair, replace and rebuild to recreate a safe space for people with HIV disease.

The community responds

Many organizations have started community meetings to talk about security concerns as a result of these break-ins. Tension in the gay and lesbian community seems to be on the rise. As Suzanne Pharr pointed out at one of the meetings, "It's not just the violence, it's the threat of violence that stops and controls people."

Detectives C. W. Jensen and Shirley Zahler of the Portland Police bureau's Bias Crime Unit have asked people to contact them directly at 796-3466 if they have received harassing phone calls or mail. This would apply especially for people who donated money to the campaign and whose names were in the campaign's files and if the harassment started after the June 8 break in.

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