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**NORTHWEST NEWS**

# HEIL HOMOPHOBIA?

## Neo-Nazi resurgence fuels rumors of gay bashings

By ERIN ROOK

Last month, as Rose City Antifa presented a panel on the White Power Movement on the West Coast, a Facebook status and text message-driven buzz about alleged queer bashings by neo-Nazis was reaching full swell.

The messages varied in exact content, but claimed there had been "confirmed attacks" on people leaving gay bars, numbering "five in five days."

Neither the Portland Police Department, Rose City Antifa (RCA) nor *Just Out* were able to verify that the alleged attacks actually took place, but while the post-rumor anxiety has died down, neo-Nazi activity appears to be gearing up, according to RCA and hate crimes experts.

"It's difficult to make a judgment [about the validity of the rumored attacks] because, unfortunately, it's within the realm of possibility," said Alicia, a member of RCA, the Portland chapter of Anti-Racist Action, who withheld her last name for fear of retaliation from neo-Nazis. "Without a doubt [attacks on queers and other minorities] tend to happen with increasing frequency when white power groups are on the rise."

Portland Bias Crimes Detective Kevin Warren said that while he had seen no increase in criminal activity by neo-Nazi groups, "They certainly have a presence. They are here." Typically, he said, "they fly under the radar until they do something stupid."

According to one panelist at the White Power Movement talk, it's only a matter of time before someone is killed. The unidentified man's comment was in follow-up to discussion of the March 27 near-fatal shooting of Portland anti-racist activist Luke Querner.

Police are calling the shooting gang-related, but RCA members, and even one source within Portland-based white power group Volksfront, believe Querner may have been targeted by neo-Nazis because of his activism.

In the May 10 *Vancouver Voice* article "Vancouver's Volksfront," a source within the group, identified only by the pseudonym "Bailey," suggested that members of Volksfront could have been responsible for Querner's shooting.

"Just days before [Querner] got shot, there was a lot of talk about making an example of him by powerful members who are handy with a nine millimeter [hand-gun]," Bailey told *Voice* reporter Marcus Griffin. According to the article, Volksfront members would only speak on the condi-

tion of anonymity due to an organizational ban on media contact and fear of police monitoring.

In response to an interview request referencing the *Voice* article, a representative of the group's Pac-West chapter, who declined to provide a name, said in an email, "The article done by the *Vancouver Voice* was pure slander and lies. No one at Volksfront had anything to do with the shooting. That's all I have to say."

Volksfront officially condemns the use of violence to achieve its political aims, which include "white autonomy" and "white self-determination." The group bills itself as an international fraternal organization for people of European descent.

**"They certainly have a presence. They are here. ...[Typically] they fly under the radar until they do something stupid."**

- PORTLAND BIAS CRIMES DETECTIVE KEVIN WARREN

"True Aryan warriors know it is best to stick to what is legal and what is most important," said a neo-Nazi identified only by the handle "CelticWarrior4Life" in an email to *Just Out*. "I don't know anyone in the movement who is preaching gay bashing."

CelticWarrior said that while "gays pose no threat to the purity of the Aryan bloodline," he had heard of a bar fight in Portland between a gay person and one or two "flag-totting [sic]" skinheads, postulating that the conflict could have sparked the recent rumors of queer bashings.

However, if the sources in the *Voice* article are to be believed, Volksfront has bold and violent ambitions, despite their public denouncement of physical aggression. Members talk of "the coming war," the "threat to our daughters" posed by non-white neighbors and a desire to return to the old tactics of the White Power Movement. (A request for comment from Volksfront was not returned.)

Alicia pointed to the April 16 bombing of a Vancouver, B.C. anti-Nazi organizer's house and the attack on Querner outside Kelly's Olympian as signs that neo-Nazi groups are becoming bolder and more organized.

"There's been a huge escalation of tactics," Alicia said, "something we haven't seen since the '80s in Portland." She added that RCA's tip line had also experienced a significant increase in calls about neo-Nazi sightings,