

Hate makes a comeback in the Pacific Northwest

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Nearly two decades after the Aryan Nations' Idaho compound was demolished, far-right extremists are maintaining a presence in the Pacific Northwest.

White nationalism has been on the rise across the U.S., but it has particular resonance along the Idaho-Washington border, where the Aryans espoused hate and violence for years.

The neo-Nazi group was based near Hayden Lake, Idaho, starting in the 1970s, and eventually was bankrupted in a lawsuit brought by local activists and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Its compound was seized, and supporters dispersed.

But a series of incidents in recent weeks show far-right sentiments never really left the conservative region. In the county that is home to Hayden Lake, for instance, Republicans last month passed a measure expressing support for U.S. entry of a prominent Austrian far-right activist who was investigated for ties to the suspected New Zealand mosque gunman.

In 2018, at least nine hate groups operated in the region of Spokane and northern Idaho, including Identity Evropa, Proud Boys, ACT for America and America's Promise Ministries, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center. The center does not track how many members belong to each group.

Keegan Hanks, a researcher for the Southern Poverty Law Center, said the number of hate groups is growing across the U.S., driven in part by a toxic political culture. The human rights group counted 784 active hate groups in the U.S. in 2014 and 1,020 in 2018.

In particular, white supremacist groups are growing because of fears that the country's racial makeup is changing. "That drives a ton of anxiety," Hanks said.

These new far-right activists are more scattered than the ones who used to gather at the Aryan Nations by the dozens, experts say.

"It is no longer necessary to go to a compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho," said Kristine Hoover, director of the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies in Spokane.

With the proliferation of social media, groups "form in dispersed locations" and gatherings are "more covert," she said.



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Karl Wolf raises his arm in a Nazi salute in 1998 as he marches through the streets of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Nearly two decades after the Aryan Nations compound was demolished, far-right extremists maintain a presence in the Pacific Northwest.

In late April, a self-described "American Nationalist" named Brittany Pettibone appeared at a meeting of Kootenai County, Idaho, Republicans to ask for help to bring her boyfriend, Martin Sellner, to the country from Austria. Pettibone, 26, said Sellner wants to marry her and live in Post Falls, Idaho.

Pettibone was a big promoter of the hoax known as "Pizzagate," telling her online followers Hillary Clinton and other high-profile Democrats were involved in satanic rituals and child sex trafficking tied to a Washington, D.C., pizza restaurant.

Sellner is a leading figure in the extremist "identitarian" movement, which espouses a white nationalist ideology and has swept over Europe amid an influx of migrants and refugees. He has confirmed he exchanged emails with the suspected New Zealand shooter, who donated money to Sellner's group. But Sellner denies involvement in the attack.

Despite his background, the Kootenai County Republican Central Committee passed a resolution urging the federal government to allow Sellner into the United States. The resolution said the government revoked Sellner's travel privileges "for political reasons," and demanded those privileges be reinstated.

Faced with criticism for giving Pettibone a platform, Kootenai County GOP Chair Brent Regan blamed the press. "In its lust for scandal, the media has stretched the committee's simple act of kindness into headlines that are too bizarre to be fiction," he wrote in a recent op-ed.

Also last month, The Guardian published internet chats from 2017 in which a Washington state legisla-

tor and three other men discussed confronting "leftists" with a variety of tactics, including violence, surveillance and intimidation.

The messages prompted Washington House Democrats to demand that the Republican lawmaker, Rep. Matt Shea of Spokane Valley, be reprimanded for a history of far-right speech and activities. While Shea did not propose violence, he did not speak up when violence was proposed, Democrats said.

House Republican Leader J.T. Wilcox of Yelm responded that Shea should not be punished before investigations are completed. The House, led by Democrats, will conduct an independent investigation of the lawmaker.

Shea, who rarely speaks to reporters, did not return numerous messages from the Associated Press.

He has served in the state House since 2008, introducing bills to criminalize abortion and roll back gun laws and pushing for eastern Washington to secede from the rest of the state. The military veteran attracted international attention in 2018 after a document he wrote laid out a "biblical basis for war" against people who practiced same-sex marriage and abortion, and instructed: "If they do not yield, kill all males."

In a third case, a nationwide arrest warrant was issued in May for a Stevens County, Washington, man who allegedly tried to extort members of his right-wing militia group through anonymous written threats backed by insinuations they came from a Mexican drug cartel.

James "Russell" Bolton, 51, faces at least six charges of extortion and attempted theft after he was arrested recently in West Virginia.

Sick of co-worker's sick leave

Dear Annie: I am a waiter in a restaurant and enjoy my job. I am 34 years old and struggled to find work that I like before I found this job. I really love being a waiter. The customers are mostly friendly, the food is good, and I try to make eating at our restaurant an enjoyable experience for all diners.

The owner of the restaurant is friendly to the customers but a stern disciplinarian to the cooks, the wait staff and the dishwashers and busboys. He is not mean to us; he's just strict and not very friendly or approachable. I hardly ever talk to him. He scares me a little. The assistant manager who hired me four years ago was nice, but he left for another restaurant and his replacement is so-so — very quiet and always trying to kiss up to the owner.

The problem is that there is one waitress who calls in sick once a week, every week, no matter what, and the other waiters and I have to do her work for her. She has been with the restaurant longer than any of us. Her sick days are all over the map. One week she calls in sick on Tuesday, and then the next week Friday. She keeps changing the days of the week, but without fail she takes one sick day every week.

I told her that when she calls in sick, we have to do her work for her, and she replied that that's how it has always been. "Besides," she said, "You can get more tips."

Money is not the issue; fairness is.

I am so fed up with her and this whole situation that I am thinking about quitting. I am also thinking about calling the man who hired me, who is now at a different restaurant, and ask-

ing him for a job because of this. But I'm afraid that he will tell the owner of my restaurant since they are still friends. I'm really feeling sick and resentful. — *Slowly Smoldering*

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

Dear Smoldering: You are allowing the waitress calling in sick to make you feel sick and resentful. While I understand that you don't want to do her work, she makes a good point that you are making more money in tips when she is out. If you don't care about the money and are that concerned with "fairness," perhaps you should look for another job. While it might seem like the waitress is "faking" her sickness because of the frequency of her sick calls, we have no idea what is going on. And I am certain that you and the restaurant customers do not want a sick waitress serving them.

If you love being a waiter and you love the customers, then look at this as an opportunity to really show management how well you

can do your job. Hard work without complaining pays off in the end.

Dear Annie: I read with interest the column by the 72-year-old man who was disappointed that his 71-year-old girlfriend does not show interest in sex. Well, as a 70-plus woman, let me tell you that with declining (and absent) estrogen, the thought of sex is not prime on our minds. However, I made a discovery a year or so ago when my urologist prescribed an estrogen cream for my frequent UTIs. I suddenly love having sex with my husband again. My sex drive has returned and we are going through a second honeymoon phase. If most post menopausal women who have no sex drive would check with their doctor they might discover that sex can actually be enjoyable again.

I am assured by my doctor that the amount of estrogen in the cream is safe. So, a visit with a gynecologist or urologist may be an easy fix. So ladies, there is hope out there. — *Old and Happy in Retirement.*

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