

Comedy in Age of Trump

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“My analogy was that if you walk into a pet store, they don’t have all the hamsters separated,” he said. “They all have different colors, some have spots and all that stuff, yet they’re getting along just fine. And I thought, how is it possible that these little creatures with these tiny brains are able to look past each others’ outward appearances and get along and live together in peace.”

His guests are folks from all over the country, and have included Jennifer Noble, a professor who has talked about the rise of interracial families in America; Preacher Lawson, a comedian and former America’s Got Talent contestant who is in an interracial relationship; and a same-sex interracial couple who’ve been together for 35 years.

Brannon’s next comedy show in Portland comes Monday, Jan. 29 when the Minority Retort, a premier stand-up comedy showcase featuring comedians of color, is held at the nonprofit Hollywood Theater in northeast Portland from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

During the show, he plans to recount a disturbing racist encounter he had while performing in Sand Point, Idaho. It happened after a white supremacist group was passing out fliers, saying “Negroes aren’t people, and you know, things like that, white genocide, all that stuff,” he said.

When a reporter told him about the fliers before the show, he was not deterred. Brannon still performed and even videotaped the reactions at the end of the show, which was sold out. Audiences were chanting his name



PHOTO BY JULIE ADAMS-PERSON
Nathan Brannon, pictured with his wife and young son, hosts a podcast about being in an interracial relationship.

in approval and cheering. All seemed normal.

“I was prepared to put the show online to kind of say, ‘Hey look, there are great people here. Just because there are a few idiots doesn’t mean the whole town is terrible,’” Brannon said.

But when he reviewed the video, he saw something odd. One table near the front was cheering like the others, but they all held up what seemed like an innocuous hand symbol, in unison.

“You connect your index finger and your

thumb and then your other three fingers are kind of extended, like a ‘W’ I guess,” he said. “I found out it’s a white pride or white power sign. It used to mean ‘OK.’ That’s what I thought they were saying, at first. Like, yeah that’s all right. But I guess it’s kind of treated more as a dog whistle [for white supremacists] these days, since the election,” Brannon said. “It’s going around, I think, a lot. Like, that’s one of the newer symbols.”

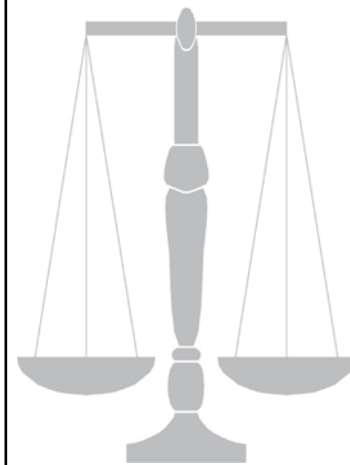
The Outline, a news website dedicated to stories about racism in today’s culture confirmed that prominent members of the alt-right like Milo Yiannopoulos, ex-Breitbart writer Mike Ma, and others have been adopting the gesture since the election as a symbol of solidarity with President Trump, who also frequently uses the gesture in his speeches. It’s also a frequent pose of alt-right adopted meme Pepe the Frog.

Brannon appreciates the many other members of the audience who were extremely supportive.

“They were really troubled by it and stuff like that so I did my best to bridge the gap or try to use comedy to try and diffuse that whole situation,” he said. “I think right now, the way our society is, if we’re not willing to go and talk to people at the ground level, and meet people face to face, then we’re going to let all these hateful groups get a hold of the narrative and I don’t think we can afford for that to happen.”

Copies of Nathan Brannon’s comedy albums ‘I Black Out’ and ‘Because’ are currently available on iTunes and Bandcamp. His podcast, The Hamster Village, is available on iTunes, GooglePlay, and Podbean.

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MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY

22 <i>Brian Wildsmith</i> born, 1930 National Blonde Brownie Day	23 Measure Your Feet Day National Handwriting Day National Pie Day	☾ 24 <i>Eskimo Pie Patent-</i> <i>ed, 1922, Christian</i> <i>Nelson</i> <i>Gold Discovered in</i> <i>California At Sut-</i> <i>ter's Mill, 1848</i>	25 Opposite Day <i>First Winter Olym-</i> <i>pics held, 1924</i>	26 Australia Day (<i>first</i> <i>settled, 1788</i>)	27 Lewis Carroll <i>National Geographic</i> <i>Society Founded</i> (1888)	28 <i>Jackson Pollock</i> born, 1912 (<i>Artist</i>) National Kazoo Day
29 <i>Baseball Hall of</i> <i>Fame established</i> (1936) National Puzzle Day	30 <i>Franklin D.</i> <i>Roosevelt born,</i> <i>1882 (23rd</i> <i>President)</i>	○ 31 Backwards Day <i>Jackie Robinson</i> born, 1919 (<i>Base-</i> <i>ball Great</i>)	<h1>CALENDAR</h1>			