



In Defense of Democracy & Civil Rights

COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY

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NORTHWEST UPDATE

October 15, 1998

1. WYOMING ANTI-GAY MURDER: After he was reported missing, Matthew Shepard, an openly gay Political Science major at the University of Wyoming, was found Wednesday, October 7, one mile east of Laramie, Wyoming near death and tied to a fence like a scarecrow. Shepard suffered a smashed skull and cuts and burns to his face and body. He had been left for over twelve hours. He died five days later, never waking from his coma.

Four University of Wyoming students have been arrested for the attack on the 5'2" 105 pound Shepard. Russel Arthur Henderson, 21, and Aaron James McKinney, 22, are charged with murder, kidnapping and aggravated robbery. Their girlfriends Chastity Vera Pasley, 20, and Kristin Leann Price, 18, are charged with being accessories after the fact. According to McKinney's girlfriend and father, Shepherd was attacked after he made public advances toward McKinney. McKinney and Henderson lured Shepard into their car where they beat Shepard while they drove to a remote location in the woods. Shepard apparently was then tied up, beaten, burned and abandoned.

Though conceding that Wyoming law needs to be strengthened, Gov. Jim Geringer expressed concern that hate crime laws give one group of people "special rights" over others—a similar argument to that used by Wyoming's conservative legislature in opposing hate crime legislation. According to the FBI, African-Americans remain the largest nationwide target of hate motivated violence while the gay community is the fastest growing.

The notorious homophobe, Rev. Fred Phelps, planned to disrupt Shepard's funeral by continuing his "No Tears for Queers" campaign. Phelps invited his national membership to go to Wyoming and protest at the funeral home.

However, this unimaginable incident has also brought national support to Shepard's family and to the issue of hate motivated violence. Thousands of letters and emails from around the world expressing sadness and concern over the incident flooded the hospital where Shepard was cared for. A candlelight vigil organized by the Mountain States Network Against Bigotry (303-839-5953) was attended by over 1,000 people. An Oakland, California activist, Jai Jai Noire (510-531-5373, jaijai@earthlink.net), set up a "Bigot-O-Thon" which asked people to pledge money for every person that attended the Phelps sponsored anti-gay rally. Funds will be donated in the name of Phelps.

The staff of CHD send their condolences to the family of Matthew Shepard. (CNN, October 12, 1998)

2. WHITE ON WHITE HATE CRIME: A white woman in Snohomish County, Washington was the victim of racist vandalism. Her neighbor, Donald C. Richards, wrote "Nigger Lover, KKK" on the rear window of her car and then was seen pouring gasoline on her driveway. He did not get a chance to light it; when asked what he was doing with the gasoline he replied that he was trying to get oil stains off of the woman's driveway. The woman's boyfriend, who lives in Seattle, is black. Richard faces one count of felony malicious harassment. (*The Herald*, September 25, 1998)

3. ANTI-HISPANIC HATE CRIMES: After harassing four teens, including two Hispanic males, in the parking lot of a Warrenton, Oregon Mini-Mart, Shirley Keith, 51, pulled out a gun and fired a round at them as they fled in their car. Keith was arrested on charges of unlawful use of a weapon but may face hate crimes charges if authorities can prove she shot at the youths because two of them are Hispanic. Keith is reported to have made racial slurs as she verbally assaulted the teens.

A group of white and Indian students yelled racial slurs at a group of Hispanic students at Omak High School, leading to a fight between approximately 40 students. The brawl led to the arrest of one teen on fourth degree assault and malicious harassment charges, and the suspension of seven other students. (*Daily Astorian*, September 29, 1998; *Seattle Times*, September 30, 1998)

4. COTC LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION: Literature from the Church of the Creator was left on the lawns of several residents in a neighborhood near Marysville, Washington. COTC has contacts in Seattle, Federal Way,

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Sumas and Tacoma. Matt Hale, an Illinois neo-Nazi, heads the organization; he recently passed the bar and is now a lawyer. (*The Herald*, October 1, 1998)

5. RACIST E-MAILING AT BOSTON COLLEGE: Approximately 13 students of color at Boston College received racist emails during the first week of October. All of the recipients are leaders in the school's "minority" community. The message read, "BC is for white men." Authorities have not reported any suspects in the case. (Associated Press, October 3, 1998)

6. LATTER DAY SAINTS CONTRIBUTES TO ALASKA'S MEASURE 2: The Latter Day Saints Church recently donated \$500,000 to activists fighting for the passage of Alaskan state constitutional Amendment Measure 2, which would ban same-sex marriages. Although headquartered in Utah, the LDS Church claims that they are contributing to an out of state political campaign because they have over 24,000 members in the state. The Alaska Family Coalition has also been successful in raising \$100,000 in support of Measure 2. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1998)

7. NORTH CAROLINA ANTI-ABORTION VIOLENCE: Thousands of expected anti-abortion protesters were diverted from picketing outside of two North Carolina clinics when bombs were found at each location. Several sticks of dynamite connected to a detonator and a timer was left near the front door of the Carolina Women's Clinic. No information was available on the device left outside the Hallmark Women's Clinic, three miles away. Both clinics were targets of arson attempts in September. About 200 people showed up to protest anyway. The search for suspected abortion clinic bomber Eric Rudolph continues in the northern area of the state with over 200 law enforcement officers scouring the mountain sides. (Associated Press, October 3-5, 1998)

8. CALIFORNIA GROUP DONATES TO WASHINGTON'S I-200: Ward Connerly's California based American Civil Rights Institute has donated an unspecified amount to fund a \$128,000 60-second radio spot supporting Washington state's anti-affirmative action proposition I-200. Connerly's group had previously donated \$213,000 to the I-200 petition drive, which was successful in placing the racist measure on Washington's November ballot. (*The News Tribune*, September 29, 1998; *Northwest Asian Weekly*, September 26, 1998)

9. RACIST GRAFFITI AT NOOKSACK RESERVATION: Two men were arrested for allegedly spray painting swastikas and racist graffiti directed at the Nooksack Tribe in Whatcom County, Washington. Timothy E. Brown, 21, and Trebbles Stareforth Rainey, 20, face possible malicious harassment charges. A third individual who is a juvenile may also be charged in the case. (*Bellingham Herald*, September 1, 1998)

10. GREEN ANTI-IMMIGRANT EFFORTS CONTINUE: Jon Robinson, a Sierra Club activist and a 1998 candidate for the group's board of directors, is the scheduled speaker at an October 22 meeting of the anti-immigrant group Virginians for Immigration Control. Robinson's scheduled date with VIC is an example of ongoing alignment of some environmental activists with the anti-immigrant movement. VIC says of the Sierra Club, "When we think of great organizations, groups like the Christian Coalition, the NRA, and the Sierra Club come to mind as examples of effectiveness." (VIC newsletter, October 1998)

11. LEADS IN AMTRAK DERAILMENT: The FBI may have a new lead into the fatal 1995 derailment of an Amtrak train in Arizona. Several stolen vehicles, including an off-road truck, rest at the bottom of an 165 foot mine shaft in the general area of the train derailment. The FBI is especially interested in the off-road vehicle. It has increased its reward to \$320,000 for information which leads to an arrest in the case. A flyer was left at the scene of the accident with the name of an unknown group, Sons of the Gestapo. (Associated Press)

12. ROT BIO-WEAPONS CASE: Three members of the Republic of Texas have been arrested in connection a plot to overthrow the U.S. government. The three men, John Wise, 72, Oliver Emigh, 63, and Jack Grebe, 43, are charged with conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction. The men were targeting President Clinton as well as several other high ranking officials. They planned to shoot cactus thorns containing the AIDS virus into their intended targets after which the men apparently believed that their actions would help collapse the United States government, permitting them to take over. (Reuters, October 19, 1998)

13. ARYAN NATIONS IS PLANNING AHEAD: Aryan Nations leader Richard Butler has announced plans for a July 1999 march through downtown Coeur d'Alene. Butler dubbed the rally the "400 Man Parade." The July 1998 rally brought 100 neo-Nazi marchers to Coeur d'Alene—costing the city over \$100,000, and raising \$30,000 for human rights groups who received donations for every minute the racists remained in the street. AN is hoping to have the parade coincide with the Aryan World Congress, scheduled for July 2-4, 1999. However, Coeur d'Alene mayor Steve Judy said that the closest available date for a permit is July 10. (*Spokesman Review*, October 1, 1998; Aryan Nations web site)

14. MID-LIFE CRISIS FOR OPERATION RESCUE: In the wake of recent drops in membership, the California chapter of Operation Rescue is currently directing recruitment efforts toward teenagers. The militant anti-abortion group reports that it is facing massive membership and contribution losses. Jeff White, an OR leader, says that the number of people who turn out for their events has dropped by 90% and their contributions have dropped from \$70,000 per month down to \$22,500. White also reports that the median age for members is 50 years old. In response, White brought together close to 25 teenagers for his "Survivor Summer '98" summer camp. The camp rallied the teens—some of whom are children of known anti-abortion activists—around the slogan, "If you were born after 1972, you're a survivor! 1/3 of our generation has been killed before birth." The camp not only taught attendees the dogma of the anti-abortion movement but also taught the proper tactics for protesting in front of clinics and the offices of politicians. (*Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1998)

15. DETROIT NAACP LEADER THE TARGET OF RACIST GRAFFITI: "KKK" and "Die" were spray-painted on the garage door outside of the home of the mother of Macomb County NAACP President, Shirley Miles. Miles' mother has lived in the same home for over 24 years and is currently bereaving the death of her husband. No suspects have been apprehended. (*The Detroit News*, October 1998)

16. LE PEN MAY FACE MORE CHARGES: French neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen, who holds a seat in the French Parliament, may lose his parliamentary immunity for comments he allegedly made trivializing the Holocaust. If Le Pen loses this immunity, granted to members of Parliament, he could then face a criminal trial in Germany where he made the alleged comments. German law prohibits the trivializing or denial of the Holocaust and mandates jail time and fines for such comments. (Reuters, October 15, 1998)

17. QUEER AND ASIAN: Queer and Asian is a Seattle based organization that addresses the challenges encountered by gay people who are also of Asian decent. The group helps individuals deal with the feelings of what they call "dual minority" status and with the issue of conflicting identity through support services and social functions. Contact: (206) 834-6234. (*Northwest Asian Weekly*, September 26, 1998)

18. JAMES BYRD FOUNDATION: Louvon Byrd Harris, the sister of the Jasper, Texas torture and murder victim James Byrd, has started the James Byrd Jr. Foundation for Racial Harmony in remembrance and honor of her brother. The Foundation will begin by addressing racial problems in prisons. Harris says that the next step of the group will be to create similar programs for use in schools. The James Byrd Foundation: (713) 633-1429, (281) 651-9688. Meanwhile the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is holding rallies for white rights outside the courthouse where Byrd's accused murderers' are being tried on capital murder and kidnapping charges. (*The Olympian*, September 28, 1998; Associated Press, October 10, 1998)

••• The CHD Research Department prefers incident reports, newspaper clippings, event write-ups, questions and comments to be e-mailed to chdpdx@aol.com. Alternatively you can mail such items to the address below or call us either in Portland or Seattle at the numbers listed below. CHD Research staff rely upon such information to fill out much of the Northwest Update and we appreciate your contributions. •••

