

LAW ENFORCEMENT, COMMUNITY, AND PRESS BRIEFING PAPER
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Ben Klassen's Church of the Creator

Florida's Ben Klassen founded the Church of the Creator (COTC) in 1973. The racist ideology driving the group was based on books written by Klassen, including *Nature's Eternal Religion* and *The White Man's Bible*. Klassen named his theology "Creativity" and appointed himself "Pontifex Maximus," or "highest priest."

Creativity boils down to worshipping the white race. It teaches that white people are the "creators of all worthwhile culture and civilization." It views the white race as nature's finest creation, while "racial treason," which encompasses practically any interaction outside the white race, "is the worst of all crimes." Those following Creativity and active in COTC are called "Creators." What they deem beneficial for the white race is viewed as the highest virtue, and "what is bad for the White Race is the ultimate sin." COTC believes that Creativity is the only salvation for the white race, and that Christianity is a lie perpetuated by Jews. Creativity refers to people of color as "mud races" and claims Jews are engaged in a conspiracy against the white race. An integral part of COTC doctrine is RAHOWA, an acronym standing for "Racial Holy War." It is used to describe a worldwide ethnic cleansing that will leave white people as earth's only inhabitants. COTC views Adolph Hitler as a religious prophet.

Klassen led COTC throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. During that time, Creators established a propensity towards violence. A Florida "Reverend" murdered an African-American Gulf War Veteran. A Washington Creator firebombed a regional office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Another Creator was arrested for placing a bomb on the front steps of a law officer's home in Maryland. The history of violence has continued.

Starting in 1990, Klassen began searching for a successor. Before getting the successor situation stabilized, Klassen committed suicide in 1993. Instability plagued the group until Matt Hale took over in 1996.

Matt Hale's World Church of the Creator

Under Hale's leadership, the World Church of the Creator (WCOTC) became one of the most active hate groups in the country. It held public meetings at libraries, aired programming on public access television, and held public rallies. Hale's combination of blatant racism, clean-cut appearance, and law school education translated into his appearance on many national news programs.

The violence began during Klassen's reign continued after Hale's takeover. In 1999, Creator Benjamin Smith went on a shooting spree in the Midwest. Targeting people of color and Jews,

Smith killed two people and wounded eight others before committing suicide. Prior to the spree, Smith had been named “Creator of the Year” for his racist activism and had moved to Illinois to help out at WCOTC’s headquarters. Hale refused to condemn Smith’s actions, saying Smith with a “pure heart and pure will struck back against the enemies of our people.” WCOTC began selling shirts commemorating Smith stating “Judaism must be destroyed” in Latin.

In January 2003, Hale was indicted for trying to arrange to have a federal judge killed. U.S. District Court Judge Joan Lefkow was presiding over a trademark infringement case involving WCOTC. In November 2002, Judge Lefkow ruled that Oregon’s Te-Ta-Ma Truth Foundation has a trademark on the term “Church of the Creator.” She ruled that the hate group could no longer use the term or acronyms like WCOTC and COTC. In response to the ruling, Hale moved the group’s headquarters to Riverton, Wyoming. Hale said Judge Lefkow’s ruling “places our Church in a state of war with this federal judge.” According to authorities, this statement was not just rhetoric.

The indictment against Hale claims that, between November 29, 2002 and December 17, 2002, he tried to get someone to “forcibly assault and murder” Judge Lefkow. It was during this time that Hale moved the group’s headquarters to Wyoming. Prosecutors have referred to a recorded conversation between Hale and an FBI informant discussing the need to “exterminate the rat [Lefkow].” It has also been reported that Hale wanted to get home addresses for Judge Lefkow and the attorneys representing the Te-Ta-Ma Foundation.

Matt Hale and Montana

Matt Hale’s reign as Pontifex Maximus began in Montana. He was named the group’s leader at a 1996 meeting in Superior, Montana. This was the first of many trips Hale would make to Montana as WCOTC’s leader. The group held annual meetings in Superior, and Hale gave a presentation at the University of Montana in 1999. One of Hale’s first actions as Pontifex Maximus was renaming the organization. First he changed Church of the Creator to “New Church of the Creator” and then settled on “World Church of the Creator.”

Another connection to Montana was Hale’s pursuit of a license to practice law. He graduated from Southern Illinois University’s Law School and aggressively fought to obtain a license to practice law, eventually applying to the Montana Bar Association. He first applied to the Illinois Bar, but he was rejected by the Bar’s Character and Fitness Committee, which stated Hale had a “gross deficiency in moral character.” Hale appealed the ruling to both the Illinois Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. Both refused to hear the case.

In September 2000, Hale announced that he had applied to the Montana Bar. A Character and Fitness subcommittee denied his application in 2001. The full committee decided to review the application; however, according to Hale, this review would not be conducted until litigation involving him in Illinois was resolved. That never happened.

Hale faced litigation stemming from Benjamin Smith’s shooting spree, along with lawsuits questioning WCOTC’s tax status. Hale was also busy filing a lawsuit against the Illinois Bar Association and Illinois Supreme Court for denying him a law license. Finally, there was the

trademark infringement case against WCOTC which prompted Hale to allegedly try and arrange the murder of a federal judge.

Montana Creators

For over a decade, there have been Creators active in Montana. Throughout that time, there have been three major activists: Dan Hassett, Slim Deardorff and Rudy Stanko. A common theme for these three activists is that they were all involved in COTC before Hale was its leader, and, over time, Hale has disavowed all of them.

Dan Hassett - Missoula

Dan Hassett's Creator activism pre-dates Hale's leadership. He has conducted countless literature drops of WCOTC's *Facts That the Government and the Media Don't Want You to Know* throughout Western Montana. The pamphlet promotes conspiracy theories stating Jews control the government and media, along with eugenics-like science supposedly proving that the white race is superior to others.

For years, Hassett was listed as WCOTC's Northwest Regional Director. He has been named "Creator of the Year" and given the "Award of Honor" for his WCOTC activism. Hassett helped plan and arrange the annual meetings held in Superior and was an essential piece of Hale's hate machine. In 2000, Hale said Hassett would "help steer the wheel of our Creativity ship" should Hale be taken into the "Empire's custody." Hassett occasionally wrote for WCOTC's publication *The Struggle* and administered many of the group's e-mail lists. He also helped get WCOTC's video series *White Revolution* on Missoula Community Access Television. Hale hoped to "teach White youth through this program to be as racist as possible." Hale even tried to get Hassett to testify in the trademark infringement case during its early proceedings.

Slim Deardorff - Superior

Slim Deardorff's racist activism goes back to the 1970s, when he identified himself as the "Marshall" of the Posse Comitatus, a racist and anti-Semitic group. *The Spokesman Review* reported that Deardorff visited Aryan Nations in 1984 and was acquainted with Bob Mathews and David Lane, members of The Order. It also reported that Deardorff corresponded with Lane after Lane was sentenced to life in prison. The Order, comprised of Aryan Nations and National Alliance members, engaged in a crime spree in the 1980s that involved armed robbery and murdering a Jewish talk-show host in Denver. The murder led to Lane's imprisonment. Mathews died in a shootout with law enforcement near Washington's Whidbey Island. Like Hassett, Deardorff's involvement with the COTC predates Hale.

Deardorff's main function under Hale was hosting the annual meetings that took place at Deardorff's shack outside Superior. Although WCOTC always said the gathering would draw many activists, the usual turnout was between five and twenty. Past gatherings have included the burning of a wooden swastika and public demonstrations in Superior. For sponsoring this annual event, Deardorff received the "Award of Honor."

Hassett and Deardorff Expelled

The close relationship between Hale, Hassett and Deardorff came to an end in February 2002. Hale claimed Hassett had stolen over \$8,000 in WCOTC funds. The money was in the form of gold bars and was buried on Deardorff's property. Hassett claimed the gold bars were destroyed in a fire that also consumed Deardorff's shack. Hale said he knew where the bars were buried, and the gold would not have been destroyed in the fire. He also claimed that Hassett had threatened to give damaging information about him to the FBI.

Hale stated Deardorff contacted National Alliance leader William Pierce about taking over leadership of WCOTC. Deardorff was the chairman of the "Guardians of the Faith Committee" which selects the Pontifex Maximus. Hale said suggesting new leadership for the group constituted "treason."

Hale stripped both Deardorff and Hassett of their WCOTC membership and rank. He stated that "sometimes it is necessary to wash away that which is dirty if we ourselves are to remain clean." He also attempted to consolidate his power by appointing a new Guardians of the Faith Committee.

The ousted Montana "Reverends" refused to disappear. They formed their own splinter group which goes by variations of the name Church of the Creator Northwest. This group refers to Hale's group as "Hale Cultists." Hassett has stated Hale suffers from "pathological propensities" and engages in "reckless behavior." The Church of the Creator Northwest appointed California's Dane Hall as its Pontifex Maximus. Hall, a former "reverend" for Hale's group, refers to Hale as a "mental midget." It is this Hall-led faction that is planning a rally in Superior on March 15, 2003.

Rudy Stanko – Formerly of Billings

Long before the fallout between Hale, Hassett and Deardorff, Rudy Stanko was a thorn in Hale's side. Stanko was one of the people whom Klassen appointed to be his successor in the early 1990s. At that time, Stanko was serving a prison sentence for selling tainted meat to school lunch programs. After serving this sentence, Stanko found himself back in jail, and Klassen appointed another successor.

Over the years, Stanko has used the Pontifex Maximus title and Church of the Creator affiliation when it suited his needs. He has sold Church of the Creator books through his "Creator Publishing" business. Creator Publishing advertisements have appeared in the anti-Semitic tabloid *The Spotlight* and *Resistance*, a magazine dedicated to white power music. Selling the books drew Hale's wrath. In *The Struggle*, Hale wrote "Mr. Stanko is making a living off our money from the proceeds of our books...it is now impossible for me to come to any other conclusion besides that Rudy Stanko is interested in Rudy Stanko, and not the future of Creativity." Stanko continued selling the books. He has also authored *The Score*, an anti-Semitic book claiming that his meatpacking corporation was destroyed through a Jewish conspiracy.

During his time in Montana, Stanko had numerous brushes with the law. He tried to use his position with COTC to gain access to women prisoners in Montana. The Montana Supreme Court denied him. Stanko was also charged with unlawful restraint for handcuffing a woman to a staircase and received misdemeanors for reckless boating on the Yellowstone River. He once challenged a conviction by saying the jury was not made up of his peers, since the jurors weren't convicted felons and they voted.

Now living in Wyoming, Stanko has been trying to get the Fremont County Commission to grant him authority to kill wolves, an endangered species, that he claims are preying on his cattle. Stanko claims that he is exercising his "natural common law rights," and thus is exempt from any federal law he thinks violates these rights, including the Endangered Species Act. He has told the media his major problem is with the "Bolsheviks in Washington, D.C."

Where is COTC Headed?

Hale's arrest and indictment have stopped any momentum WCOTC may have generated. He faces 30 years in prison if convicted. After the ruling against WCOTC in the trademark infringement case, Hale moved the group's headquarters to Riverton, Wyoming. Due to the court ruling, the group has changed its name to "The Creativity Movement." Hale's second in command, Thomas Kroenke, is running the group in Wyoming. An interesting side note is that Riverton is located in Fremont County, which is where Rudy Stanko is currently active.

On the Montana front, Hassett announced in February 2003 that he was leaving the Church of the Creator Northwest. He said "my resignation does not indicate a departure from our ideals but rather an alteration in my Movement work, tactics and affiliations." Shortly thereafter, Dane Hall, leader of the Northwest splinter group, announced that Hassett had "claimed to hold many positions" in COTC, but that was a "gross misrepresentation of the truth." Hall continued by saying that Hassett has "misled many Creators." Apparently, Hall did not like Hassett any better than Hale. Deardorff continues to be active with the Northwest group, and Hall has named Superior's John Haase his second in command.

The Superior Rally

Dane Hall has notified members of the Northwest group's e-mail list that it will hold an anti-war rally on the steps of the Mineral County Courthouse in Superior on March 15, 2003. According to Hall, Superior's John Haase and Slim Deardorff are sponsoring the event.

Hall says the rally is open to "creators and like minded White Racial Loyalist[s]." The rally is to protest America going to war with Iraq at Israel's behest. Hall says that "It's time the Jews fight their own battles." He says "to HELL with the Kikes," because America has been "hoodwinked into fighting the wars that the Jews instigate for decades."

As the Montana Human Rights Network issues this briefing, we have not been able to confirm that the rally will definitely take place. We have been told that rallies in front of the Mineral County Courthouse do not require a special permit, which means the Northwest group has the ability to show up on March 15, 2003 without prior warning.