

Montana Human
Rights Network

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SPEAKING VOLUMES: TRANSFORMING HATE

The Books, the Hate Group, and the Anti-Semitism that Underlies It All

How the Montana Human Rights Network Got “The Books”

J.R.¹ grew up poor on a grain farm in eastern Washington. He served in the military, got involved in criminal activity, and did some time in prison. He held various blue-collar jobs and eventually joined a biker gang that included many racist members. While working as a mechanic for an Idaho mining operation, he was introduced to a virulent racist and anti-Semitic group called the Church of the Creator².

Founded in 1973 by Florida’s Ben Klassen, the Church of the Creator (now called the Creativity Movement) was one of the largest and most active white supremacist groups in the country during the 1990s. While the hate group experienced much infighting and leadership crises, its steadfast activists continued following “Creativity,” the group’s racist religion. Creativity weathered these times of unrest primarily due to the numerous racist and anti-Semitic books written by Klassen that outlined the group’s ideology. Large numbers of the books had been printed, which featured titles like *The White Man’s Bible* and *On the Brink of a Bloody Racial War*, and they continued to circulate. They provided not only a philosophical rudder for Creators (followers of the Creativity Movement), but also a steady stream of income through sales in white supremacist publications.

J.R.’s journey in the Creativity Movement peaked when he was named “Hasta Primus” (second in command) of the Church of the Creator Northwest. Based in the small town of Superior, Montana, this small splinter group formed after internal squabbling between Montana Creators and national leadership. Creators had been in Montana for years, and they had made it through multiple national leadership struggles. Their constant presence resulted from two primary sources—long-time activists and a stockpile of Klassen’s books. The books provided financial support for the Montana faction, J.R. said, bringing in about \$100 month.

“We Creators take this stand: Yes, we are proud to be racists. Yes, we are prejudiced in favor of the White Race at all times, in all things.”

--Ben Klassen,
writing in *The White
Man’s Bible*



- 1) The name of the defector has been replaced by these initials for his safety.
- 2) The term “Church of the Creator” is a registered trademark that belongs to the TE-TA-MA Truth Foundation, which is a non-profit religious organization that encourages universal love and respect for all peoples. It is not associated and should not be confused with the white supremacist group founded by Ben Klassen. In November 2002, the organization founded by Klassen was ordered to stop using “Church of the Creator” and renamed itself the “Creativity Movement.”

The Human Rights Network was well-acquainted with the Creators in Montana. Formed in 1990, the Network monitors and researches radical right-wing groups. It uses this information to help communities organize against white supremacist groups. On multiple occasions during the 1990s, Network staff worked with citizens in Superior and Missoula to organize rallies and other public events to show that the Church of the Creator Northwest did not represent the communities' values. It was this on-the-ground presence confronting Creators that led J.R. to call the Network in December 2003.

J.R. told Network Co-Director Christine Kaufmann that he was done with the Church of the Creator Northwest. He said he wanted to meet to discuss the hate group's activities. J.R. told Kaufmann that he had the combination to a storage locker in Superior, which contained boxes of the group's books and some internal correspondence. For a small amount of gas money, he offered to sell the contents of the storage unit to the Network.

Network staff agreed to meet with J.R. in Missoula. He told them that his fellow Creators were a "bunch of

Ranking the Races

"...at the lowest scale of the human ladder are the blacks, the niggers and their many variants. We regard them as barely human, but more correctly subhuman or humanoid...In between the low end of the ladder and the White Race at the top are various other races, such as the redskin Indians, the mongrelized Hindus of India, the yellow Asiatics, the yellow Semitic Jews, the Polynesians, the Semitic Arabs and a host of others. We classify them all simply as the mud races as distinguished from the White Race, only the latter occupying the very top pinnacle of the human ladder."

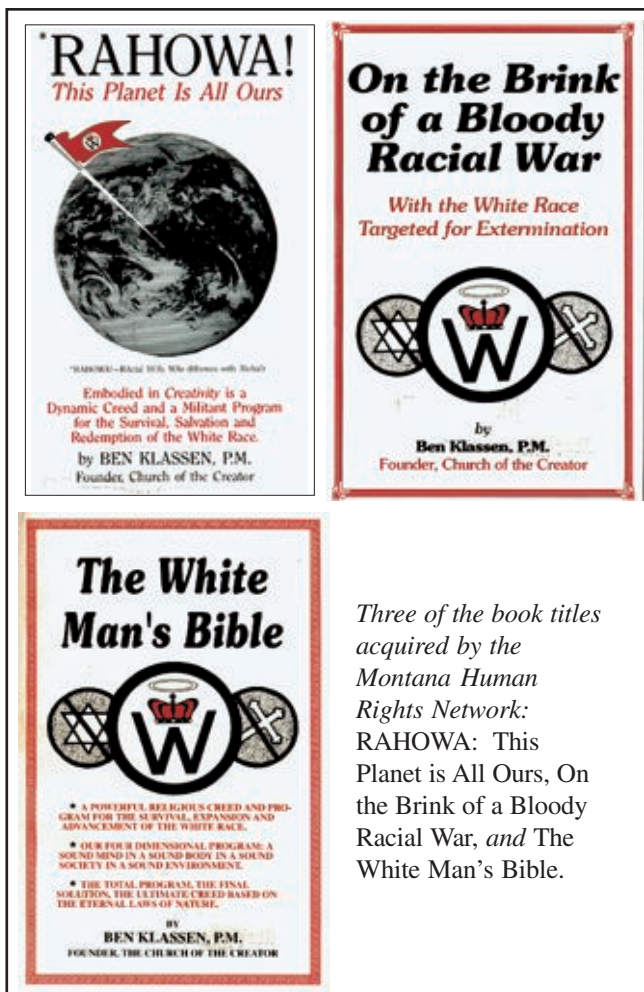
The White Man's Bible

losers." As is often the case with white supremacists, all of J.R.'s friends were part of the group. If he left the group, he felt he needed to get out of Montana for his own personal safety. J.R. also agreed to speak with law enforcement about the Creativity Movement. Network staff had J.R. sign a bill of sale for the books and other materials, and the Network gave him \$300.

After making arrangements with the police to meet at the storage unit to assure their safety, Network Co-Directors Christine Kaufmann and Ken Toole headed to Superior with two pickups and a U-Haul to take possession of the materials. After two hours, the storage unit was empty, and the Network had approximately 4,100 books. Given that they sold for \$10 each, it had removed approximately \$41,000 in possible revenue for the hate group. Along with essentially bankrupting the Church of the Creator Northwest, the Network's interest in the books was removing them from circulation, thereby removing some of the ideological glue that held the Creativity Movement together.

Almost immediately, Creators claimed the Network had received stolen property. Along with having a signed bill of sale, the Network pointed out that the Church of the Creator probably had no legal claim to the books in the first place. In 1994, the Southern Poverty Law Center won \$1 million of the Church of the Creator's assets in a lawsuit. The Law Center never tried to pick up the books as part of the judgment, believing it wouldn't be worth the effort. It applauded the Network's acquisition of the books, which removed them from circulation.

Once the books were back at the Network's office, staff was left wondering what to do with them. Burning



or shredding the books seemed inconsistent for the Network, which promotes democratic values. Instead, the Network sent boxed sets (13 different titles in all) to allied organizations, academic institutions, Holocaust museums and law enforcement. The internal Creator correspondence was sorted and copies were sent to the U.S. Justice Department for use in the trial of the national leader, Matt Hale (see below for more). However, this still left the Network with thousands of the white supremacist books.

The Network decided to use the books as part of an art exhibit to stimulate public discussion about bigotry, anti-Semitism, and intolerance. Helena-area artist Tim Holmes was brought in to help design the project and created some initial pieces. Holmes saw the potential for a larger exhibit and suggested the Network pitch the idea to Helena's Holter Museum of Art. Opening in January 2008, *Speaking Volumes: Transforming Hate* features over 60 pieces contributed by artists from around the country.

Background on the Church of the Creator

When Ben Klassen founded the Church of the Creator, he outlined its racist and anti-Semitic ideology in numerous books with titles like *Nature's Eternal Religion* and *The White Man's Bible*. He 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." The group believes 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 "jungle dwelling cannibals." Jews, Creativity believes, are engaged in a conspiracy to destroy the white race.

An integral part of Creativity 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. Creativity views Adolph Hitler as a religious prophet.

Klassen led his group from the 1970s through the 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 the regional office of the NAACP. Another Creator was arrested for placing a bomb on the front steps of a law officer's home in Maryland. Starting in 1990, Klassen began searching for a successor. Before cementing who the next leader would be, he committed suicide in 1993. Instability plagued the group until Illinois' Matt Hale took over in 1996.

No Stranger to Montana: Matt Hale Takes Control

Matt Hale's reign as Pontifex Maximus began in Montana. He was named the group's leader at a 1996 meeting in Superior, where the group regularly held its annual meeting. One of Hale's first actions was renaming the organization "World Church of the Creator."

Under Hale's leadership, the World Church of the Creator 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 lots of media attention.

Hale graduated from Southern Illinois University's Law School and aggressively fought to obtain a license to practice law. When he was denied in Illinois, he announced that he had applied to the Montana Bar Association. A Character and Fitness subcommittee denied his application in 2001. The full committee decided to review the application; however, according to Hale, this was postponed until litigation involving him



Matt Hale became the leader of the Creativity Movement in 1996. He quickly became the focal point of media coverage on the white supremacist movement. He liked to tell reporters that he used the Israeli flag as a doormat (right).

Photo from www.adl.org

in Illinois was resolved. That never happened.

The violence that 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



Benjamin Smith

people and wounded nine 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 the Church's headquarters in East Peoria. Hale refused to condemn Smith's actions, saying Smith with a "pure heart and pure will struck

back against the enemies of our people." The Church began selling shirts commemorating Smith that stated "Judaism must be destroyed" in Latin.

Hale faced litigation stemming from Smith's shooting spree, along with lawsuits questioning his group'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 a trademark infringement case against his group which prompted Hale to try and arrange the murder of a federal judge. In 2003, U.S. District Court Judge Joan Lefkow ruled that Oregon's TE-TA-MA Truth Foundation had a trademark on the term "Church of the Creator." She ordered the hate group to stop using the term. Hale said the ruling placed "our Church in a state of war with this federal judge." According to authorities, this statement was not just rhetoric, as he reached out to his members to find a possible assassin. In 2005, Hale was sentenced to 40 years in prison for soliciting the murder of a federal judge.

The Rise and Quick Fall of Church of the Creator Northwest

For over a decade, Creators were active in Montana. Two of the main activists, Dan Hassett and Slim Deardorff, were the reason the Church of the Creator Northwest formed. Both were Creators before Hale became Pontifex Maximus, and, in the end, Hale fired both of them.

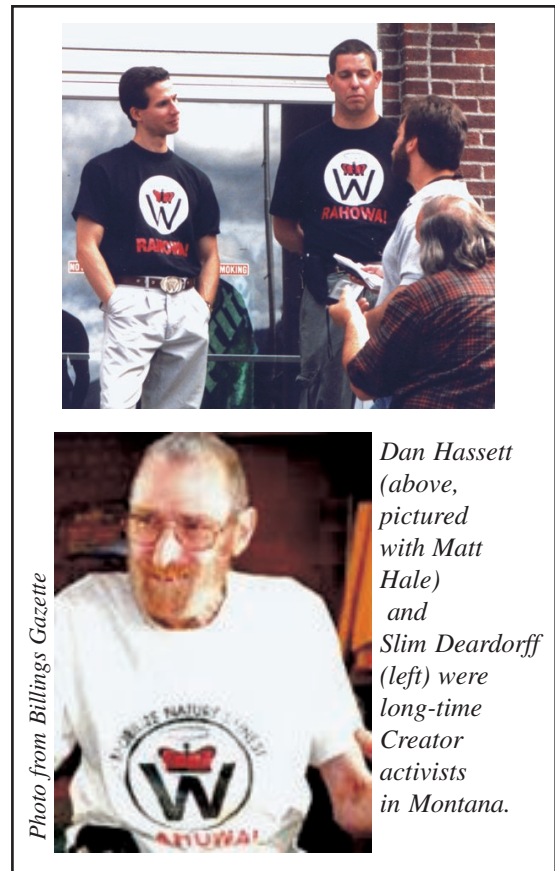
Dan Hassett conducted countless literature drops of the group's *Facts That the Government and the Media Don't Want You to Know* throughout Western Montana over the years. The pamphlet promotes conspiracy theories stating Jews control the government and media,

along with eugenics-like science supposedly proving that the white race is superior to others.

For years, Hassett was listed as the World Church of the Creator's Northwest Regional Director. He was named the "Creator of the Year" and given the "Award of Honor" for his activism. Hassett helped 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 imprisoned.

Slim Deardorff's racist activism goes back to the 1970s, when he identified himself as a leader 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. 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.

Deardorff's main function under Hale was hosting the annual meetings that took place at his shack outside Superior. Although the group always said the gathering would draw many activists, the usual turnout was between five and twenty. Gatherings included the burning of a



Dan Hassett (above, pictured with Matt Hale) and Slim Deardorff (left) were long-time Creator activists in Montana.

Photo from Billings Gazette

wooden swastika and public demonstrations in Superior. For sponsoring this annual event, Deardorff received the "Award of Honor."

The close relationship between Hale, Hassett and Deardorff came to an end in February 2002. Hale claimed Hassett had stolen over \$8,000 in group funds. He also claimed that Hassett had threatened to give damaging information about him to the FBI. Hale declared that Deardorff had contacted National Alliance leader William Pierce about taking over leadership of the Creativity Movement. Hale stripped both Deardorff and Hassett of their membership and rank.

The ousted Montana "Reverends" refused to disappear. They formed their own splinter group, the

features articles from other white supremacist and anti-Semitic publications. It does list the contact points for the organization; however, the vast majority of them are currently inmates at prisons around the country. Those contact points outside prison walls tend to be relatives of Deardorff.

Anti-Semitism is Integral

When most people think about white supremacist groups, the hatred directed at people of color is usually the first thing that comes to mind. What can be overlooked is that anti-Semitism is at the root of most hate group's ideology.

A common conspiracy driving white-supremacist ideology views Jews as global power brokers out to destroy the white race, and their main tools are people of color, who are viewed as sub-human beasts or "mud people." It is the combination of racism and anti-Semitism that drives the white supremacist movement. Klassen claimed that the "Jewish race" was "working towards the niggerization of America." He stated "Jewish poison-peddlers" promote tolerance and equality in an effort to turn America into a "slop pail only fit for pigs and niggers." He summed up his group's view of the dynamic between Jews and people of color like this:



The Creativity Movement frequently held its annual meetings in Superior, Montana, during the mid-1990s. They would stage demonstrations in town, including on the steps of the Mineral County Courthouse.

Church of the Creator Northwest. However, by 2003, Hassett announced he was leaving the group, saying his "resignation does not indicate a departure from our ideals but rather an alteration in my Movement work, tactics and affiliations." J.R. told the Network that Hassett switched his allegiance to the National Alliance.

With Hassett gone, J.R. defecting, and the Network removing its source of income, the Church of the Creator Northwest was left in the hands of Deardorff, an old man in poor health. After his shack burned down, he lived in a trailer on his property, before moving to Plains, Montana, to live near his son in 2006. He still occasionally puts out a newsletter, which generally

"It is the Jews' fanatic and unswerving goal to poison the White Man's genes by not only pumping the black blood of Africa into the veins of White America, but committing similar atrocities in all other White countries... Everywhere the Jew is pushing the poison of alien hordes not only into the White Man's breeding grounds but promoting mixed marriage as well...The dangerous role the niggers play in this triangle is that they are the means by which the Jews plan to destroy the White Race...He wants to proliferate the niggers amongst the White Race, to promote race-mixing, intermarriage and finally the mongrelization of the White Race into a brown mulatto, dumb and subservient..."

Creativity Movement Promotes Historical Anti-Semitism³

Hatred of Jews simply because they are Jews is often called “the oldest hatred.” The term “anti-Semitism” was coined in the 19th Century in Europe by people who claimed Jews were a race apart from and inferior to other white Europeans. Creating the term “anti-Semitism” was an attempt to make hatred of Jews sound more scientific. What began as a conflict over religious beliefs centuries ago, evolved into a systematic policy of political, economic, and social isolation, degradation and, in some cases, annihilation.

One of the oldest and most common accusations made against Jews is that they killed Jesus Christ. It grew out of the interpretations of the trial and crucifixion from the Bible’s New Testament. As a result, Jews have historically and collectively been held responsible for the death of Jesus, despite the fact that Roman rulers executed Christ along with thousands of Jews.

White supremacists routinely reach back over 2,000 years as a starting point to explain their anti-Semitism. Former Ku Klux Klansman David Duke wrote in an essay, “Only Satanism can rival Judaism’s vicious hatred for Jesus Christ,” and he outlined why Judaism had forever been at odds with Christianity. White supremacist message boards online routinely carry posts where Jews are blamed for killing Christ.

The Creativity Movement has a different take on Jews and Christianity. It denounces Christianity itself as a Jewish perversion. Klassen taught that Christianity promotes “poisonous advice” and relies on “spooks in the sky.” He said the religion made Romans “ripe for destruction.” “They paid the penalty,” Klassen wrote, “of allowing themselves to be mongrelized and not recognizing their eternal enemy, the Jew.” The start of Christianity, Klassen believed, began the “modern and most deadly phase” of the Jewish campaign to destroy the White Race. He stated:

“If Roman civilization had prevailed, what a blessing for this world it would have been! Instead of a Jew-ridden world racked by revolution, dissension and anarchy, teeming with increasing

3) The majority of this section on the history of anti-Semitism is taken from the Anti-Defamation League’s *Confronting Anti-Semitism: Myths and Facts*, available online at http://adl.org/education/as_myth_facts.asp.

The White Man’s Bible

“Our Natural Enemies. And who are his [white man] natural enemies? Number one on the list is the International Jew, the whole Jewish network, the Jew as an individual. Number two is the mass of colored races, whom we shall designate simply as the mud races.”

floods of mongrels and mud races, we would today have a beautiful White world and every part of every continent, prosperous, peaceful, orderly, and productive. We would have a world minus the mud races and inferior scum that infests so much of the good real estate of the globe today, and undoubtedly minus the destroyer of all civilizations—the parasitic Jew.”

Leading up to the Middle Ages, a new pattern of institutionalized anti-Semitism took place. Jews were forbidden to marry Christians; prohibited from holding high positions in government; and could not testify against Christians in courts. As the institutionalizing of anti-Semitism increased, so did bizarre allegations against Jews. It was believed that Jews had horns and tails and engaged in the ritual murder of Christian children (known as the “blood libel”). When the Bubonic Plague began to spread throughout Europe, Jews were accused of poisoning wells and spreading the disease.

These pieces of anti-Semitic history were wholeheartedly embraced by Klassen. He wrote that Jews were “rightfully” accused of poisoning wells, because they dropped diseased bodies into the drinking water and spread the plague. He also detailed the supposed accuracy of the blood libel:

“Ritual Murder or Blood Libel Accusations:

One of the most abhorrent and depraved of religious rituals indulged in by Jews over the centuries...The Jews deny this bestial practice...The fact is that they have not only been accused of this same bestial practice since Roman times, but have been convicted of it and hanged, decapitated and burned at the stake for this crime in practically every country in Europe....”

Increasingly Jews were subjected to political, economic, and social discrimination, resulting in the deprivation of their legal and civil rights. Since Christians were not allowed to lend money for profit, some Jews became money lenders and tax collectors. They became associated with the forbidden trade of usury, and a new set of stereotypes evolved around Jews as money-hungry and greedy. As long as the Jews benefited rulers, they were tolerated. However, when it suited a ruler, they were expelled — from England in 1290, from France in 1394, and from Spain in 1492. The expulsion of Jews from countries is frequently cited as “proof” by white supremacists that Jews are evil. Klassen wrote that conflicts between “parasitic Jews” and their home countries were “as old as history itself.” He said Jews kept coming back, though, because they were “like cockroaches.”

In the late 19th Century, anti-Semites pointed to a tract, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, as proof of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate world political and economic sectors as well as media. This proven forgery was written by agents of the Russian czar and claimed to be the minutes of a secret meeting of Jews that detailed plans of Jewish leaders to rule the world. The proven forgery spread throughout the 20th Century and continues to this day to promote the stereotype that the Jews own the banks and control the media.

Common variations of *The Protocols* conspiracy theory run rampant in modern-day hate groups. Klassen cited *The Protocols* in his writing as fact. Relying on the forgery, he claimed Jews bragged about starting the French Revolution. He also reinforced the international conspiracy theory, writing “the Jew today is in control of the money, propaganda media, and the governments of the world.” Matt Hale continued this trend by promoting a Creativity piece entitled *Facts That the Government and Media Don’t Want You to Know*.

The most notorious and genocidal campaign of anti-Semitism came with Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich. Hitler played up conspiracy theories about the victimization of Germany during World War I, blaming

The White Man’s Bible

“Those master mind-manipulators of all time, the parasitic Jews, have done their job well...the White Race is suffering from a malignant disease of the brain called Jewitis.”

The White Man’s Bible

“Niggers and Mongrels. The black African is shiftless, lazy and dumb. He is completely ignorant of the concept of responsibility and is prone to crime and violence...Today’s Black Plague is spelled niggers. It is more menacing, more deadly and more persistent than the Black Death of the middle ages ever was....”

Jews for poisoning Germany’s body politic. He also called upon anti-Semitic falsehoods like the “blood libel” to evoke fear that Jews would desecrate the “Aryan race.” According to Hitler’s doctrine, all Jews and their genetic pool had to be eliminated. The result was the “Final Solution,” the systematic attempt to exterminate all Jews. Six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

Klassen admired Hitler and took issue with his portrayal in history. He complemented Hitler for waking up to Jewish treachery and organizing the “awesome power” of the White Race to “turn on the Jews.” Klassen also denied the Holocaust happened:

“There is not a shred of evidence that the Germans ever proposed, sanctioned, or contemplated such a policy of extermination... The six million figure is a great big lie...The Six Million Lie has had a devastating effect in shaming and discrediting the German people, and indirectly the White Race.”

Klassen’s books offer countless examples of how anti-Semitism from the past is still used to craft white supremacist ideology. The lies born thousands of years ago are used as current ammunition against the Jewish community. Like most other hate groups, the Creativity Movement is based on these recycled lies that are blindly accepted as fact.

When Jews are portrayed in a dehumanizing manner as the power brokers behind a vast conspiracy to destroy the White Race, it is not surprising when Benjamin Smith, Matt Hale or others cross the line from offensive speech into physical violence. In their minds, Jews and people of color are their mortal enemies and a race war is coming (some think it has already started). In reading Klassen’s foundational texts, it isn’t hard to see why Creators have a history of violence:

“They [Jews] always have been our mortal enemies and will be as long as they continue to exist...Our only choice is to fight and overcome them.”

“It is our holy vow to purge this malignant Jewish cancer from the brain of our precious White Race and banish it forever from the face of the earth.”

“It is our goal and purpose to root out and destroy the Jews and the niggers before they destroy us.”

“We therefore consider the Jew as a deadly and implacable enemy and declare everlasting war on the Jews, a war to the finish, until we have expelled them from all the lands inhabited by the White Race.”

Racism and Anti-Semitism Outside Museum Walls

With Ben Klassen dead, Matt Hale behind bars, the Montana chapter non-existent, and over 4,000 racist books out of circulation, it can be tempting to declare victory and go home. The Creativity Movement is largely dead. Unfortunately, the underlying message lives on.

Since 1990 when the Montana Human Rights Network formed, we have seen many organized hate groups come

and go in the state. The Aryan Nations chapters folded and Klan units formed. The Klan disappeared and the Creativity Movement gained a hold. The National Alliance and American Nazi Party rose to prominence with the demise of the Creators.

Victory is elusive, and it is elusive because these groups amplify and prey upon the racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobia, and class inequity that already exist in our communities. Examples of this can be seen in sentencing disparities between white people and people of color in our criminal justice system for the same crimes. They can be seen in the wage disparity between women and men doing the same jobs. They can be seen in the fact that poor children go without health care and attend under-funded schools simply because they were born poor.

Standing up and opposing hate groups is necessary and very important work. However, communities also need to address the underlying systemic problems. We hope the dialogue fostered by the *Speaking Volumes* exhibit will promote discussions of the problems that communities face. Only when the roots of bigotry and intolerance are dealt with can we declare victory and view the *Speaking Volumes* exhibit as representative of our collective past.