



Dimensions

❖ JOYCE S. ANDERSON Special to the Jewish Times

Hate Groups in America

When James von Brunn, an 88-year-old white supremacist, fired his rifle in the Holocaust Museum on June 10, the shock waves reverberated across the country. He had a long history of anti-Semitic writings on his Web site and in his book, "Kill the Best Gentiles," alleging a Jewish "conspiracy to destroy the white gene pool." The man von Brunn fatally wounded, Stephen T. Johns, a six-year veteran guard at the museum, was the latest victim of vicious crimes in the United States by members of hate groups that exist in every state in the union.

The single best source for information on hate groups in the United States is the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. This organization has a 25-year record of putting hate groups out of business by winning law suits in the courts. In each case, SPLC pays all litigation costs and all monies recovered go to victims of hate group violence. When Klansmen lynched a black teenager in Mobile, Alabama, Center lawyers argued that the Klan was accountable for the acts of its members. They won the case and the \$7 million judgment bankrupted the United Klans of America. In 2008, the SPLC won justice for Jordan Gruver, 16, who was brutally beaten at a county fair in Brandenburg, Kentucky by Klansmen because of his skin color. They attacked him as an "illegal spic," although Jordan is a U.S. citizen. He suffered broken bones and permanent physical and mental injuries. The Imperial Klans of America were hit with a \$2.5 million judgment.

Four times a year, the SPLC publishes their "Intelligence Report" with articles and factual information about the hate groups in the United States. In the Spring 2009/133 Issue, there is an important summary and analysis of 2008, "The Year in Hate." First, the numbers of hate groups have increased: "Last year, 926 hate groups were active in the U.S., up more than 4 percent from 888 in 2007. That's more than a 50 percent increase since 2000 when there were 602 groups." The numbers are represented on a map of the United States with each state and the number of groups. New Jersey is near the top in the Northeast with 40. New York has 24, Pennsylvania has 37 and Massachusetts has 13. The highest numbers are in the South and West with California at 84, Texas at 66, Florida at 56 and South Carolina at 45. No state has 0 number of hate groups in residence.

The Report lists the hate groups by name and identifies them on a U.S. map by states as well: Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazi, White Nationalist, Racist Skinhead, Christian Identity, Neo-Confederate, Black Separatist and General Hate. General Hate includes sub-categories of Anti-Gay, Anti-Immigrant, Holocaust Deniers, Racist Music labels and a variety of groups endorsing "a hodge-podge of hate doctrines." The SPLC gathers its information from hate group publications, citizen reports, law enforcement agencies, field sources and news reports. Activities include marches, rallies, speeches, meetings, leaflets, publishing material or criminal acts. Cyberspace listings are not included since they often represent individual Web sites rather than group.

The Report does have a section of Hate Websites: 630 hate sites active in 2008 under group headings: Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazi, White Nationalist, Racist Skinheads, Christian Identity, Neo-Confederate, Black Separatist, Racist Music and General Hate. Here are a few at random if you wish to pull them up and sample their messages first hand: Jewish Treason, www.jewish treason.com, Bergen County Hooligans, www.furiat.net, White Knights of America, www.whiteknights of america.com, Aryan Union, www.aryanunion.org. Just reading the seven pages of names of the 630 Web sites is a sobering experience. Hatred

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A View of the Absurd

❖ JACK ENGELHARD Special to the Jewish Times

This is Getting Ghoulish

Jonas Salk was never mourned like this – and he cured the world of polio.

No disrespect to Michael Jackson the pop star, pay him whatever tributes you wish, but I wonder how many other Jacksons live and die good ordinary lives and yet we do not call out their names. I wonder how many Michael Jacksons there are in our military, in harms way right this minute in Iraq and Afghanistan, who serve without recognition.

This wall to wall coverage, these mobs grieving over an entertainer, all of it, in such excess, approaches ghoulishness. The last time this happened was when silent screen idol Valentino died young and, as H.L. Mencken tells it, Valentino was startled by his fame and uncomfortable in his skin as a sex symbol – so surely he would have been horrified by the multitudes who grieved his death.

Obviously many of us lead lives of "quiet desperation" (Thoreau), so we live vicariously, through the lives of others, mostly entertainers and athletes. Nathanael West covered this in his Hollywood novel "The Day of the Locust," about those lonely people who have turned fetish in their adoration of celebrities, alive or dead. Their sorrow becomes dangerous when it marches as a mob.

Let's not dwell on the value of Pop to our culture, nor of the public vulgarity during his singing and dancing. Some people, like Pee Wee Herman (Paul Reubens) get arrested doing in private for what Jackson did in public. Also, let's not touch on whatever urged Jackson to make song from such lyrics as, "Jew me, sue me, kick me, kike me."

On the other hand (I found this on Facebook online), Israel National News reminds us that "Jackson performed in Israel in 1993 during his 'Dangerous' tour to over 70,000 fans in Tel Aviv.

He also visited holy sites including the Western Wall." So really, there is no figuring it out – whatever possessed him (and whatever possesses others) to suddenly reach back into the world's oldest grudge.

(To my mind, anti-Semitism is a genetic reflex. It just comes on people like any other natural urge, like hunger and thirst.)

There's that other business as well that is best left alone.

Let's give him his due that he was an entertainer blessed and cursed by an overabundance of talent – to borrow from what the writer John W. Cassell told me over the phone, "That he could

never live up to what was expected of him. That's what destroyed him." I'm buying that because what Jackson is to others, Elvis was to me. Only I began to appreciate Elvis when it was too late, after he was gone.

At the time, back then, I thought he was all wrong. How I've changed about Elvis! Maybe one day I'll change about Michael Jackson.

Elvis came along when there was a cultural void to fill and I guess the same goes for Jackson.

But this is not about either of them. This is about adoration and adulation that gets out of hand. This is about idol-worship.

There is something sick in our culture when the earth stands still for a man who could sing and dance.

There is something misplaced in our priorities when our news media goes gaga over one Jackson above all the other Jacksons.

Jack Engelhard's thriller, "The Bathsheba Deadline," which centers on media deceit against America and Israel, is available in paperback at Amazon. Engelhard wrote the international bestselling novel "Indecent Proposal." He can be reached at www.jackengelhard.com.