

Supremacists Hold Rally in Pa. City With Racial Woes

Washington Post - January 13, 2002

Author: Marc Levy, Associated Press

Witnesses reported minor confrontations in the streets today as police kept hundreds of demonstrators at bay during a rally by white supremacists in a city still feeling the effects of deadly race riots more than 30 years ago. Matthew Hale, leader of the white supremacist group World Church of the Creator, spoke to about 70 supporters at a library while police officers in riot gear, some on horseback, separated shouting groups of his supporters and anti-racist protesters.

"We seek the advancement of white people, our people, without any apologies, any compromise, any groveling before anybody," Hale told supporters and spectators inside the library.

Witnesses reported seeing car windows broken and minor confrontations in the streets throughout the afternoon. Police said 25 people were arrested, mostly for disorderly conduct, and several guns were confiscated.

Hale's group has been accused of helping hone the racist beliefs of a man who went on a shooting rampage in 1999. The gunman, Benjamin Smith, killed two people and wounded nine in Illinois and Indiana before taking his own life. All the victims were Jewish, black or Asian.

Two Hale appearances in Illinois in 2000 ended in violence, with people arrested after each melee.

York was the scene of riots in July 1969 after a black teenager was wounded by a white man. A police officer was killed on the second night of violence while riding in an armored car. Four days later, a black woman was slain by shots fired from a white mob as she and her family drove to a grocery store.

Last year, nine white men -- including Mayor Charlie Robertson -- were charged with the murder of the black woman. Two black men were arrested in October and accused of killing the police officer. Robertson dropped a reelection bid and is awaiting trial.

Hale has said he picked York, a racially mixed city of 41,000 in central Pennsylvania, for his appearance because of its high profile in race relations and because Pennsylvania has been a hotbed of racial division.

Edition: F

Section: A

Page: A7

Dateline: YORK, Pa.

Record Number: 011302XA07Su895103

Copyright 2002 The Washington Post