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World Church of Creator founded in 1973



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ALLISON FARRELL - IR State Bureau - 03/28/04 | Posted: Saturday, March 27, 2004 11:00 pm | (0) Comments



Photo provided - Dane Hall, the leader of The World Church of The Creator, at one of the group's annual rendezvous in Superior. He is one of the two remaining members of the World Church of the Creator.

HELENA -- The Church of the Creator was founded by Florida racist Ben Klassen in 1973, who dubbed the group the "Creativity Movement" and appointed himself "Pontifex Maximus," or supreme leader.

Creators eschew Christianity and worship the white race, believing whites to be the creators of all worthwhile culture and civilization. Klassen's books, with such titles as "The White Man's Bible" and "Nature's Eternal Religion," fuel the group's beliefs and sales of the books serve as the church's main source of income.

The church rallies to the cry "RAHOWA!," which stands for racial holy war.

Klassen led the church up until he committed suicide in 1992. During that time, a Florida "reverend" associated with the church murdered a black Gulf War veteran. Another member firebombed a regional office of the NAACP in

Washington state and yet another was arrested for placing a bomb on the stoop of a law enforcement officer's Maryland home.

The violence continued after Illinois native Matt Hale took over the group in 1996. Hale was appointed Pontifex Maximus at the church's annual rendezvous at Slim Deardorff's shack outside Superior. He changed the group's name to the World Church of the Creator after the Church of the Creator, a religious group in Oregon, sued the racists for trademark infringement.

In 1999, church member Benjamin Smith went on a shooting spree in the Midwest. Targeting minorities, Smith killed two and wounded eight before killing himself.

Hale's clean-cut appearance and law school education -- he was denied law licenses in both Montana and Illinois -- lent him a legitimacy that landed him on many national news programs. The group held public meetings at libraries, aired programming on public access television and held public rallies.

Hale even spoke at the University of Montana in 1999, at the invitation of sociology professor Rob Balch.

In January 2003, Hale was indicted for allegedly soliciting the murder of federal judge Joan Lefkow, who in 2002 ruled against the church in the trademark case. Lefkow said the racist group could no longer use the name the Church of the Creator, or any phrase containing the words "church" and "creator."

Hale refused to comply with Lefkow's order, and as he arrived at a contempt hearing Jan. 8, 2003, was arrested for allegedly soliciting her murder. Law enforcement officials said Hale asked a group member who turned out to be FBI informant Tony Evola to kill her.

Hale pleaded not guilty, but was denied bail and has been sitting in jail ever since. He is not allowed to have contact with the media and awaits his April 6 trial in a small cell in solitary confinement at Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center.

Before Hale was jailed, the church became one of the most active hate groups in the country. While the Southern Poverty Law Center said the group's membership numbers have been consistently overstated, the 200 hard-core activists the group claimed at its height made it the second most important white supremacist group in the United States.

The group splintered several times after Hale was jailed. His attempt to move church headquarters to Riverton, Wyo., in 2003 was unsuccessful and over time, factions split off from The World Church of Creator as members struggled for power. Hale eventually disavowed Montana's main activists Slim Deardorff of Superior, Dan Hassett of Missoula and Rudy "Butch" Stanko, formerly of Billings.

Stanko now lives in Nebraska and Hassett, who left the group in 2002, said he no longer has anything to

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do with racist groups.

In 2003, Dane Hall of California was appointed to lead the Montana faction, and he and Deardorff remain its only active members.

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