

Hale supporters confused about whom to hate

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When notorious racist Matthew Hale was convicted in federal court this week of trying to have a federal judge killed in Chicago, some of his sympathizers decided to put pressure on the government's key witness, Tony Evola.

Evola testified that Hale had given his assent to having U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow killed. In retribution, Evola's address and phone number were put on white supremacist Web pages, where the emotionally diseased can find it.

But the Hale lovers made a mistake.

They put the wrong Evola on the Internet.

"Yes, my father's name is Tony Evola," said Joe Evola, 28, who talked to me Tuesday.

"But he's not the same Tony Evola. And they put our phone number and address out there on the Web."

You mean he's not the Tony Evola from the Matt Hale trial?

"No," Joe said. "We got a bunch of calls. We talked to the FBI. Now the police are out front of the house.

"We don't want to be associated with these people. My dad even stayed home from work today; the whole family is upset. I called one person who runs one of these Web sites, and he laughed at me."

The FBI's Chicago office did confirm that white supremacists put the wrong Evolas on the Web.

"We're investigating," said FBI spokesman Ross Rice. "If anyone were to make interstate harassing or threatening telephone calls, that would be a violation that we would vigorously pursue. The Evola family you talked to have been mistakenly targeted by these white supremacists."

Antonio Evola, 62, who lives in the western suburbs, is a school janitor. Serafina Evola, 54, is his wife. Joe works for a printing company. His sister, Joanne, 23, is pursuing a college degree.

They don't know Matthew Hale or the other Evola.

These Evolas are from Cinisi, a small town of a few thousand people just outside of Palermo, Sicily. They immigrated to the U.S. in 1984.

Serafina answered the first call the other day.

"It was a guy asking for Tony," Joe told me. "She doesn't speak English that well, and she couldn't understand him. We talked to the police. Then we contacted the guy with the Web site in New Jersey.

"He's got a radio show. And he made fun of my mom's English on the air. When I called him, he was saying, Tohn-ee, Tohn-ee, live on the air, laughing at how my mom talked, going `ha-ha-ha-ha.'"

"He said his sources were reliable to put my family's address and phone number on the Web. And he said my mom had a foreign accent."

Does she have a foreign accent?

"She should. She's from Palermo," her son said. "But why make fun of it?"

Hal Turner is the New Jersey man who makes fun of women from Palermo. I thought about putting his address in the paper, so other New Jerseyites of Sicilian ancestry might look him up to chat about making fun of Sicilian women.

But I'd rather he amuse himself on his own dime.

He runs a dinky Web-based radio program that he describes as "the first eugenics-based radio show." Eugenics, as any white supremacist can tell you, is defined as the hereditary improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding.

He did confirm that he put a link on his show's Web site to another white supremacist Web site containing the erroneous information on the Evolas.

"I spoke to the woman you're talking about," said Turner. "A Hispanic."

How do you know she's Hispanic?

"It sounded Hispanic," Turner said, getting defensive. "And since I live in Hudson County, N.J., which is 60 percent Hispanic, I have a good idea what a Hispanic accent sounds like."

So you're sure she's Hispanic?

"Unless a person is completely disconnected from reality, they determine what things sound like," he said.

He said that he had a 1st Amendment right to put Evola's name and address on the Web. And if he got it wrong, it wasn't his fault.

"He was the star witness of a major federal trial, and the story was timely and newsworthy," he said.

You're trying to pressure Tony Evola, I said.

"You presume I intended to do harm when, in fact, I have proven the exact opposite," he said, his radio voice rising, and I thought of a pink and hairless creature in a dark room.

"When I found out that the people felt they were in danger, I immediately removed that story from my Web site," he said.

Soon, some New Jersey Sicilians might knock on his door, to discuss things. He might laugh at their accents and call them, "Tohn-ee! Tohn-ee!"

By the time they leave, though, he may feel a little disconnected from reality.

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