

## New Tactics, Tools and Goals Are Emerging for White Power Organizations

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Frank Weltner's cluttered living room is one of the unlikely new hot spots in America's old and ongoing preoccupation with race.

Mr. Weltner, a 63-year-old former local radio talk show host, began what white power groups say is the first round-the-clock racial Webcast this year. He can run many Web sites, including what he calls his most popular one, Jewwatch.com, with a laptop computer and a microphone from the comfort of his couch.

Technically savvy and politically in tune with their communities, Mr. Weltner and people like him are the new figures to watch in the white power world, say people who track extremist groups. Many of the national organizations -- like the Aryan Nation, Creativity and the National Alliance, Mr. Weltner's group -- have fragmented in the last few years. Some leaders, including Matthew Hale, the former head of Creativity, who is to be sentenced on Wednesday for soliciting the murder of a federal judge, have been removed; others have died.

"The hate groups are in disarray; the leaders have died or been jailed," said Karen Aroesty, the St. Louis-based regional director for Missouri and Southern Illinois for the Anti-Defamation League. "But what we've seen, particularly here, is a more sophisticated use of mainstream media tools in order to sell the product."

The breakdown in national leadership has coincided, outside experts and group members say, with a transformation of tools and goals. Some corners of the Internet are openly racist, but local groups have broadened their message to include immigration and adopted more subtle appeals to attract new followers.

Mr. Weltner said he preached love for the white race -- not hatred for any other -- and grass-roots action to protect the European gene pool in the United States, which he said was being diluted by immigration. "Think racially, act locally," he said.

The Internet, with its anonymity and lack of physical geography, does not lend itself to bossy leaders or compounds in the woods. Locally autonomous groups can also better refine their message to fit the markets, which further fuels the fragmentation. Here in St. Louis, which has long been one of the nation's most segregated cities, separatism -- not supremacy -- is the racial term of art. Jeff Weise, the 16-year-old who killed nine people and himself last month on an Indian reservation in northern Minnesota, was touched by the arguments of separatism and genetic purity, which he wrote about often in postings on the Internet.

Brian H. Levin, a professor of criminal justice and director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, said cruising the Internet for extremist racial views had become like shopping for books or airfares -- an endless consumer choice.

"On the Internet, you can craft your own buffet of hate," Professor Levin said.

He cautioned, however, that the growth of racist content on the Web did not necessarily mean a rise in racism in the country. The Internet's expansion into every niche of society, Professor Levin said, could merely be giving voice to impulses already there.

Some parts of the white power movement are clearly more underground than ever, diffused and dispersed into the virtual cyberspace of Web sites that claim more members than the estimated size of the Ku Klux Klan. Whiterevolution.com solicits donations via credit card.

Other elements are reaching out more than ever for a public role and a piece of the nation's debate on subjects like immigration and the growing gap between rich and poor. Adherents to the movement say the two pieces fit perfectly.

Mr. Weltner's group, the National Alliance, spent \$1,500 in February, for example, to put advertisements on the local transit trains in St. Louis, and has distributed tens of thousands of leaflets just about every weekend in recent months urging residents to "love your race."

The Council of Concerned Citizens, which is based here and has worked to protect use of the Confederate battle flag in South Carolina and Mississippi, is talking more and more about immigration, especially nonwhite illegal immigrants. The group's chief executive, Gordon Lee Baum, said in an interview that immigrants were taking American jobs and pushing the nation toward what he called "third-world status."

"As communities suffer the results of massive illegal immigration, it's become a growing concern all over the U.S.," Mr. Baum said. He said big companies bringing in cheap foreign labor were as much to blame as anyone.

"In southwest Missouri," he said, "there's a county down there now that is almost a majority Hispanic because of a big meat-processing plant."

Some local civic leaders here say the debate itself is frightening -- either because the mainstream society might come to accept a race-based perspective as part of legitimate public discourse or because people in economically battered cities like St. Louis might actually be listening.

"Groups that used to meet in secrecy are now coming out into the light," said Esther L. Wright, vice president and general manager at WGNU, an AM talk-radio station here that once employed both Mr. Weltner and Mr. Baum as hosts. "That they're becoming more acceptable is just another example of the moral decay of the society."

(Mr. Weltner's and Mr. Baum's programs were canceled last fall. Ms. Wright said that there were violations of station policy but that she could not elaborate; Mr. Weltner and Mr. Baum said changes in political taste at the station forced them out.)

Some of the results of the racist public outreach here come close to comedy. In February, for example, the owner of the Bevo Mill restaurant here, David Hanon, got what he thought was a routine booking for a private party. The European Cultural Society wanted to use his restaurant to bring in an Irish dancing school for the day and have a party to celebrate, as the group's name suggested, European culture.

Then a reporter from The St. Louis Post-Dispatch called and asked whether Mr. Hanon knew that the European Cultural Society was a front for the National Alliance, a group classified as a neo-Nazi organization by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks extremist groups.

Mr. Hanon immediately canceled the event. "A lot of people were duped," he said.

The National Alliance's transit train advertisements, meanwhile, were so vague and innocuous that few people, including the transit system's administrators, knew what

was being advertised until the one-month contract had all but run out. The posters simply said, "The future belongs to us!" with a National Alliance contact number.

Some experts say the atomization of the white organizations like the National Alliance and the Aryan Nation and the simultaneous rise of white power on the Internet make the groups less relevant. Mr. Hale, for example, had largely been marginalized in the movement, the experts say, since his conviction last year for soliciting the murder of a federal judge, Joan Humphrey Lefkowitz, who presided over a trademark infringement case involving the name of Mr. Hale's group.

Chat rooms have buzzed in recent weeks, and Mr. Hale's star has risen again if only as a symbol, after the murder of Judge Lefkowitz's husband and mother. The police say the crime was unrelated to Mr. Hale or white power groups, though cheers for those deaths were posted on some racial Web sites.

"The movement as a whole is in the process of sorting itself out, finding its next set of directions, but that doesn't make it less dangerous," said Leonard Zeskind, a writer who has been monitoring white supremacist activity for 25 years.

"People don't need to be followers of groups," Mr. Zeskind added. "They just need to be angry."

Caption: Photos: Frank Weltner is the author of Jewwatch.com and Webcaster for white separatist news and commentary. (Photo by Kristen Schmid for The New York Times); Matthew Hale, the former head of the Creativity extremist group, who faces sentencing today, is one national leader who has been removed. (Pool photo by Bill Kalina)

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