

IDHH Episode Seven: A Research Capacity



**episode 7:
a research capacity:
the work of the CHD**



CHD publicity photo (date unknown). Abby Layton in foreground, Jonathan Mozzochi back center, Stew Albert lower right in Hawaiian shirt.

Episode Summary: In Episode Seven we learn the secrets of the surveillance wing of the Coalition for Human Dignity and how activists carefully compiled and painstakingly processed information on local and regional white nationalist groups. Interviewees include Jason, Devin Burghart, Jonathan Mozzochi, Leonard Zeskind, Abby Layton, Seven Gardiner, M Treloar and Cecil Prescod.

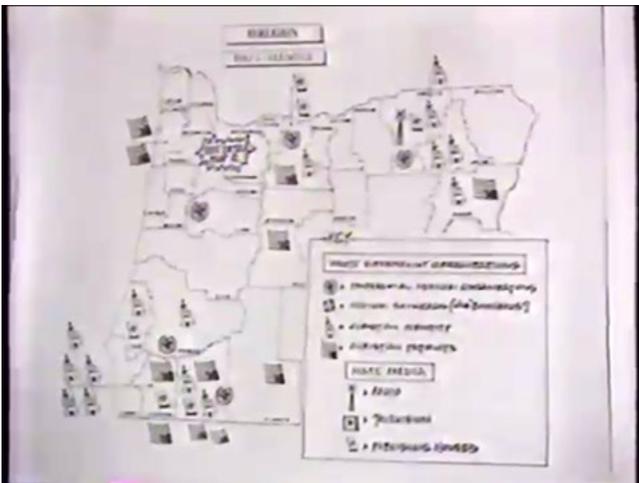
Oregon Citizen's Alliance/Ballot Measure 9 See Show Notes, *Episode 3: Building Community Defense*

Stew Albert was radicalized at age 21 after the state execution of Caryl Chessman in 1960. He co-founded the Youth International Party, or Yippies, at age 21 in Berkeley with Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. His Yippie days are well-documented; he was a beloved figure and friend of many notable activists from the anti-Vietnam War days, including Phil Ochs, Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and many others. He famously co-organized the 1968 protest of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. [Stew Albert](#) spent his last 21 years in Portland, writing and organizing for racial justice. He died of liver cancer in 2006. His memoir is called [Who the Hell Is Stew Albert](#).

The American Front is one of the oldest continuously existing racist skinhead groups in the United States, dating back to the 1980s. According to the watchdog group the Anti Defamation League (ADL) in recent years, most of its [members](#) have been from California and Florida.

The Shop was what the Coalition for Human Dignity called both the intelligence wing of the CHD and their physical office - a sublet space in an old building in an industrial part of North Portland. In the Shop, CHD activists collected and processed their data. Each piece of information was hand-filed and cataloged; the 30 filing cabinets they amassed represented thousands of hours of labor. While the Matrix office location of the CHD was frequently targeted by racists—windows broken, the pick-axe attack in episode 6—no one ever learned where the Shop was. Scot Nakagawa, as part of the public-facing wing of the CHD, didn't even know the physical location for the first year. The Shop remained a haven for the masses of intelligence on racist activities across the Pacific Northwest. Jonathan Mozzochi notes that with today's technology, the labor is different and the filing cabinets unnecessary, as computer technology permits individuals to run a mini-shop out of a cell phone.

Loren Christensen was hired by the Portland Police Bureau in 1972 out of the Army's Military Police. During the time covered by this podcast, Christensen was a nemesis of local anti racists. As a cop on the Gang Enforcement Team,



Jonathan Mozzochi at press conference covered on local television news showing map of hate groups in Oregon.



Loren Christiansen of the Portland Police Bureau and State Gang Taskforce interviewed on local TV news about skinheads.

Christensen repeatedly undermined the CHD message that the attacks on immigrants, Black people, queers and anti-racist skinheads were all related to white nationalist hate groups, that there were racist and anti-racist skinheads, and that the anti-racists skinheads were protecting vulnerable community members, not engaging in 'gang activity.'

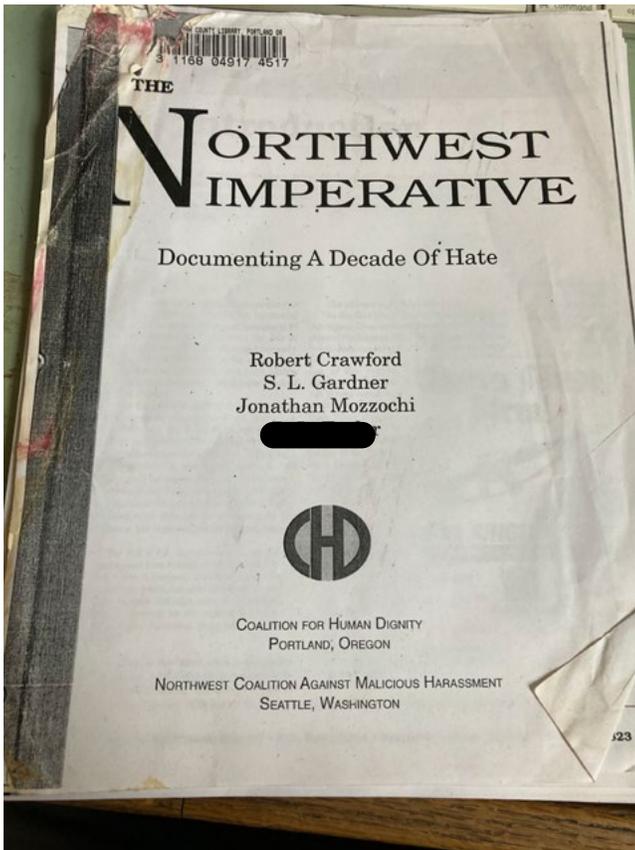
Christensen published the book *Skinhead Street Gangs* in 1994, capitalizing on his decades of misrepresentation; he has consulted many times as an 'expert' on skinhead violence. Notice Christensen proudly posing with Aryan Nation leader Tom Metzger and son John Metzger in the photo section of the book.

Christensen served 25 years as a cop and went on to a career as an author of pulpy martial arts books; his [website](#) lists him as living in the Portland area.

The Center for Democratic Renewal began in August of 1979 as the National Anti-Klan Network (NAKN) in a time of violent Klan resurgence in the southern states. In 1985 it underwent a strategic planning process and changed its name to reflect a broader focus and began to include aspects of the far-right such as non-klan white supremacists like the christian right and other features of the Reagan years. They developed educational programs with a focus on economically devastated rural areas affected by Posse Comitatus and Populist Party racists. The CDR supported the development of several organizations like the Coalition for Human Dignity, including the Montana Human Rights Network, Spokane's Interstate Task Force on Human Rights and the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment. According to Leonard Zeskind, who served almost 9 years as research director, "We were the first to note the emergence of white power skinheads. We were the first to report on David Duke's Populist Party candidacy for president in 1988. A Seattle conference we organized on anti-gay violence helped push other organizations in the Northwest to include that issue within their mandates. And when "Hate Crimes" legislation was under discussion on Capitol Hill, we fought against those who would leave sexual orientation out of the bill and as an unprotected class." The Center for Democratic Renewal [closed its doors](#) in March of 2008.

Leonard Zeskind is a lion in the world of anti-racist activism. He is a founder of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights and served for 9 years as the research director at the Center for Democratic Renewal. Here's how Leonard Zeskind defines himself in 2007 on his [website](#):

"Almost three decades ago, I began writing regularly about white supremacists, anti-Semites and related topics with a portable typewriter and plastic press-on letters....Before turning to research and writing and professional human rights activism, I worked in heavy industry: on the warehouse dock of a lamp factory, on an automobile plant assembly line, and in steel fabrication

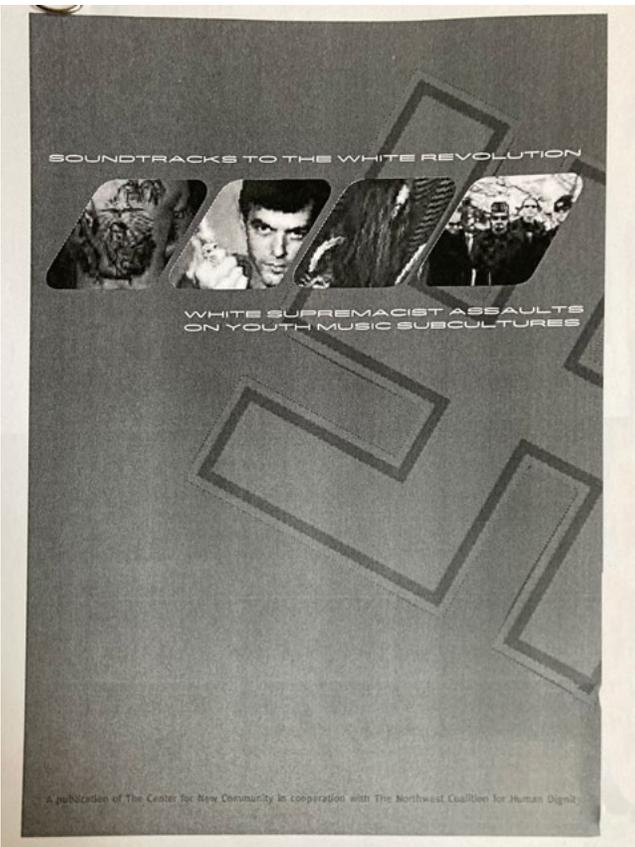


The Northwest Imperative: Documenting a Decade of Hate by the Coalition for Human Dignity and the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, 1994.

shops helping to build large girders, columns, trusses, and other elements of the manufacturing architecture. It was work that I enjoyed and still believe is undervalued. I am a high school graduate, and have earned certificates in welding and structural steel blueprint reading.

My work has been recognized by several institutions. In 1987, I received the Columbia University School of Journalism Paul H. Tobenkin Award for my contribution to an award-winning edition of the Spokane Spokesman-Review. I became a Petra Foundation Fellow in 1992 and was given the "Owen Bieber Civil Rights Award" by the Civil Rights Department of the United Automobile Workers Union in 1993. In addition, I received the "Bayard Rustin Award" from the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment in 1996. And the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded me one of its famous five year fellowships in 1998. I remain a life-long activist with the hope of repairing a badly torn world."

North Carolinians Against Racial and Religious Violence (NCARRV) was a statewide organization that monitored white supremacist organizations, provided victims' assistance, and developed and implemented the youth conference "Breaking the Cycle of Bigotry." [NCARRV](#) produced newsletters and annual reports highlighting white supremacist activities, police brutality, and other forms of oppression.



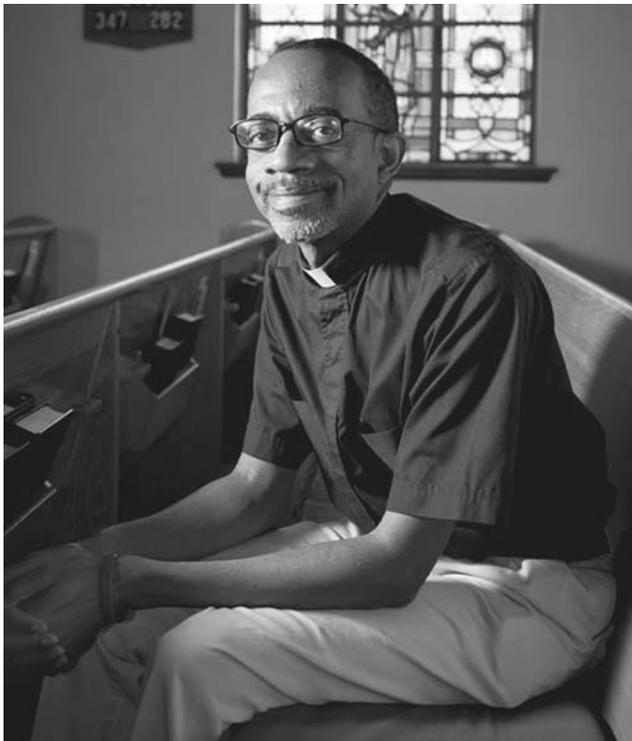
Soundtracks to the White Revolution: White Supremacist Assaults on Youth Music Subcultures by the Center for New Community, edited by Devin Burghart, 1999

Institute for Education and Research on Human Rights (IERHR) Founded in 1983 by Leonard Zeskind with CHD alum Devin Burghart on staff, and an advisory board featuring Jonathan Mozzochi and Steven Gardiner, [IERHR](#) "brings both a long-term perspective and a short-term urgency to the work of examining racist, anti-Semitic, and far right social movements, analyzing their intersection with civil society and social policy, and to educate the public and assist in the protection and extension of human rights through organization and informed mobilization."

The Montana Human Rights Network is a grassroots nonprofit organization based in Helena whose mission "is to organize Montana residents to realize their power to create pluralism, justice, and equality in their communities. We challenge bigotry and discrimination, support marginalized people, and advocate for legislation that honors everyone's basic rights." Their multi-issue approach includes exposing and combating the far right; supporting tribal sovereignty; advocating for the rights of immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ community members, reproductive rights and economic rights; abolishing the death penalty; protecting public education; and addressing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia advanced through community organizing, promoting progressive public policy, arts and activism. The simple form for anonymous reporting of hate incidents



Devin Burghart



Rev. Cecil Charles Prescod



Anti-Racist Action and other anti-nazi skins being searched by police outside of Metzger's trial in Portland.

to aggregate information clearly shows the influence of Leonard Zeskind's approach to community defense and the Coalition for Human Dignity's method of collecting far right intelligence.

Fair Housing Act referred to in the episode as the 'Fair Housing Law' is legally known as [Title VIII of the 1968 Civil Rights Act](#) signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on April 11, 1968, one week after the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development website, "the 1968 Act expanded on previous acts and prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status." While the bill came up for review in both 1966 and 1967, it took the civil unrest following Dr. King's murder to shift the ever-dithering Congress to pass the bill ensuring basic civil rights around housing in the United States. The bill's passage was also influenced by the outrage of many American veterans returning from fighting in Vietnam who were unable to rent or own a home due to the overt racism that flourished nationwide with the lack of federally guaranteed civil rights for their minority status.

The Pacific Northwest is in many ways a mythical descriptor whose borders are not officially defined. The region is generally understood to be bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains to the east; political boundaries include the U.S. states Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and the Canadian province of British Columbia. The name Cascadia is used to refer to the region by both left wing environmentalist groups like [Earth First!](#) and [right wing groups](#).

Rural Organizing Project (ROP) formed in 1992 in direct response to Ballot Measure 9, supported by the Oregon Citizen's Alliance, the Abnormal Behavior Initiative which would have legally limited the civil rights of LGBTQ people. (see Show Notes, Episode 3) According to its [website](#) "Rural Organizing Project is a state-wide organization that supports a multi-issue, rural-centered, grassroots base in Oregon. We work to build and support a shared standard of human dignity: the belief in the equal worth of all people, the need for equal access to justice and the right to self-determination." The group continues to organize today across 35 Oregon counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

Was the CHD's intelligence project successful? From a follow up interview with Jonathan Mozzochi for *It Did Happen Here*:

"How to measure the impact the intelligence aspects of our work was always a challenge. Especially for funders, who liked quantitative results. Some elements of what



This photo was taken during the Metzgers' civil trial in 1990 in Portland. From left to right: John Metzger, son of Tom Metzger; the author, Loren Christensen; and Tom Metzger, founder of WAR.

From *The Northwest Imperative: Documenting a Decade of Hate* by the Coalition for Human Dignity and the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, 1994.



The maligning of Christians by Jews, as seen by Identity Minister Pete Peters

Christian identity self-representation drawn by Rev. Pete Peters reprinted in *The Northwest Imperative: Documenting a Decade of Hate* by the Coalition for Human Dignity and the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, 1994.

we did necessarily remained secret. But you could see and measure other parts of our work. For instance, our publications reflected a quality of research on the far-right that the SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center-ed.) and ADL (Anti-Defamation League-ed.) could not match. Theoretically we also insisted that the Christian Right and white supremacist movement operated in a parallel manner; they were different, but related, especially in regards to the ample wellsprings of racism and bigotry that could be found throughout American institutions. From 1989–1993 we were building CHD into a regional think tank that also had an operational arm; we succeeded in doing that as the many “greatest hits” I talked about in my audio interview support. If we had never carried out the opposition research in Portland I think things would have been worse; I also think there was much more we could have done that could have made things better.

We were self-consciously a group “defending democracy and civil rights” against political forces that were intent on dismantling them. There is a certain sense in which the only way to prove how effective we were is if we lost; if fascism came to power we would have been proved correct. And that’s what critics would (and still do) say: look, the Christian Right is dead! The Trumpers lost! Fascism did not come to America! There was a view that what we did was misguided and extreme. You could read this in *The Oregonian*, *Willamette Week*, or the now defunct *PDXS*. We really didn’t take such nonsense seriously because for me (and I think most CHD activists) it really didn’t matter at what stage bigoted groups were in their development, how incipient or inchoate their influence, only that in a racist, exploitive, and patriarchal society such movements will always be with us and therefore must always be fought. From there one has to evaluate their relative strengths, connections to centers of power, and what kind of threat they posed to vulnerable communities. And take appropriate action. What was appropriate/effective or not being the important question; not whether one should fight them. The best evidence that our research and intelligence was useful and effective comes from activists themselves and the communities most impacted by far right violence. By this measure we were extremely effective at assisting activists in Portland during the early 1990s.”