

Episode Eight: SHARPer Times

In this episode we hear from the former SkinHeads Against Racial Prejudice. SHARPs share their experiences on how they came to hold the front lines in the fight against neo-Nazi violence on the streets of Portland.

Featured in this episode are interviews with former SHARPs Michael Clark, Pete Little and Jon Bair; former punks Chyna and Jorin; IDHH narrator Mic Crenshaw; music journalist Patrick Mazza; former CHD activists and researchers Jonathan Mozzochi, M Treloar and Steven Gardiner; and the Reverend Cecil Prescod.

Trojan Records was a label started by British-based record company Island Records in 1967 to showcase producer Arthur ‘Duke’ Reid and the music of Jamaican diaspora. They released ska and rock steady and later 2Tone music that became the soundtrack of the early multiracial skinhead scene of the UK. Symarip, the band behind the iconic skinhead anthem ‘[Skinhead Moonstomp](#)’ released their eponymous 1969 album on Trojan Records.

2Tone, Two Tone is a genre of ska music by mostly white kids from the Midlands—an area of England that includes Birmingham, a city second in size and population to London—that mixed elements of punk with reggae and rock steady music. [Two Tone](#) was reportedly named after the ‘two-tone’ Tonik suits favored by the Mods, arty white kids who flocked to ska shows and embraced Black Jamaican culture prevalent in their working class towns.

The Oregonian was founded in 1850 as a weekly newspaper by Thomas Jefferson Dryer, a staunch Whig with a propensity for strong drink, with an unspoken agenda to ‘attract settlers, sell lots, boost business and trade, attract investment and establish Portland’s economic supremacy above all others.’ Additionally, as historian Harry Stein notes at the [Oregon Encyclopedia website](#), “The paper long stood for the established order, state and city growth, private and public regional investment, and efforts to establish and maintain Portland’s supremacy over regional rivals.” Dryer was a notoriously bad money manager, and he transferred ownership of the paper in 1860 to its printer, Henry L. Pittock in exchange for unpaid wages. Today, the paper is ‘owned’ by the usual nesting-doll arrangement of corporations; Advance Publications, who own directly or through subsidiaries the [Discovery Channel](#), [Condé Nast](#), the digital news website [Wired](#), [Lycos](#), [Angelfire](#), and [Tripod](#); they are the majority shareholder in [Reddit](#). The paper is published by Oregonian Media Group, whose president is John Maher. Maher also currently serves as the co-chair of the [Portland Business Alliance](#), whose mission statement includes the sentence: “The Alliance advocates for business at all levels of government to support commerce, community health and the region’s overall prosperity.” The Oregonian has stayed true to its settler, capitalist, colonizer roots.

Media Bias, an opinion note: Media can be subtle; it’s important to be aware of who is controlling the message we consume. Careful reading of articles can tell you what the underlying message is. Take this photo spread from the September 26, 2020 from the [KOIN news website](#). The headlines say: Opposing Groups Protest in Portland: Proud Boys, anti fascists, Black Lives Matter Groups All Held Rallies. Then the first sentence: “Three separate protests of groups with vastly different ideologies took place in relatively close proximity to each other around noon Saturday.” This problematic sentence is easy to miss with its glib but outrageous statement that Black Lives Matter and ‘anti fascists’ have ‘vastly different ideologies.’ Nowhere in the caption are any ideologies explained. Then follows about 200 words describing that two groups held rallies in Vanport and one in Peninsula Park, and 39 photos

from the day, arranged in slide-fashion so viewers click from one photo to the next. Clicking through, you might not notice that of the 39 photos, 23 are from the Proud Boy rally, 6 of which feature Proud Boy supporters bent in prayer or saying the Pledge of Allegiance. 6 photos feature the cops or objects confiscated by the cops, 4 photos are from the Black Lives Matter-led protest held that day in Vanport, 2 photos are of counterprotesters facing the Proud Boys and 3 are from the Peninsula Park rally that was labeled both 'Black Lives Matter' and an 'anti fascist.' One photo is of a 'no-drama llama' , who showed up at the end of the rally at Peninsula park. The photographs, 6 of which portray white people swathed in American flags piously bending their heads in either religious or civic prayer, clearly express the implied bias of the report. While it would be difficult to 'prove' that the media outlet is biased, a 10-minute analysis like this one quickly reveals the level of propaganda present in our basic news outlets. The power of the press to influence public opinion is enormous. The activists fighting the white power racists had an uphill battle with the press, especially the SHARPs. The SHARPs' group ideology of brotherhood and camaraderie that was not officially organized into a nonprofit like the Coalition for Human Dignity or nationally networked like Anti Racist Action made them especially vulnerable to press-led depictions of them as part of skinhead-on-skinhead violence. As young warriors, they were irresistible to the media; because of their youth and desire for simplicity—they just wanted to fight neo-Nazi skinheads—they were sensationalized by the papers who wanted to preserve the peace in order to pursue business as usual. They spent their days fighting 'the bad guys' for a public who, under the influence of the media, who were fed information by racist cop Loren Christensen (see Show Notes Ep. 7) eventually lumped them in with the racist skinheads they despised. Disillusionment in this environment is inevitable.

Tone Policing is a debate tactic where a person who holds privilege responds to the emotions of a message rather than to the message itself; this allows the person with privilege to dictate the terms of the discourse, for example : "I'm not talking about this until you calm down and hold a civil conversation." The idea that reason always trumps emotion, is often at the root. You can learn more in this [comic by Robot Hugs](#) and in the excellent workbook [Me And White Supremacy](#), by Layla F. Saad. Remember to financially support their work.

Boots and Laces: From the [Anti-Defamation League website](#): As the skinhead subculture emerged in Great Britain in the 1970s, its adherents developed shared styles of clothing, including wearing steel-toed workboots made by Doc Martens or other manufacturers. The boots themselves became weapons used to kick people in fights, leading to the term "boot party," which refers to incidents in which multiple skinheads together stomp and kick a victim. Wearing such boots was and is typical of racist and non-racist skinheads alike, but racist skinheads commonly use red- or white-colored shoelaces in their boots to identify themselves as white power skinheads.

Iron Cross: From the [Anti-Defamation League website](#): "The Iron Cross is a famous German military medal dating back to the 19th century. During the 1930s, the Nazi regime in Germany superimposed a swastika on the traditional medal, turning it into a Nazi symbol. After World War II, the medal was discontinued but neo-Nazis and other white supremacists subsequently adopted it as a hate symbol and it has been a commonly-used hate symbol ever since. In the United States, however, the Iron Cross also became one of several Nazi-era symbols adopted by outlaw bikers, more to signify rebellion or to shock than for any white supremacist ideology. By the early 2000s, this other use of the Iron Cross had spread from bikers to skateboarders and many extreme sports enthusiasts and became part of the logo of several different companies producing equipment and clothing for this audience. Consequently, the use of the Iron Cross in a non-racist context has greatly proliferated in the United States, to the point that

an Iron Cross in isolation (i.e., without a superimposed swastika or without other accompanying hate symbols) cannot be determined to be a hate symbol. Care must therefore be used to correctly interpret this symbol in whatever context in which it may be found.”

Laurelhurst Park is a 32.7 acre park that features a spring-fed lake formerly used to water the cattle of previous owner and twice former Portland Mayor William S. Ladd. [Laurelhurst Park](#) is bordered by Southeast Ash Street, Southeast 33rd Street, Southeast Oak Street, Southeast Cesar Chavez Boulevard (formerly known as Southeast 39th Avenue (formerly known as Southeast 39th Avenue) and Southeast Stark Street. It lies in close proximity to several racist skinhead haunts of the late 80s and early 90s.