

# Hate Groups in Michigan: A Sham or a Shame

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Michigan Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights prepared for the information and consideration. This report will be considered by the Commission, and the Commission will make public its reaction. In the meantime, commendations of this report should not be attributed to the Commission but only to the Michigan Advisory Committee.

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The United States Commission on Civil Rights, created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the executive branch of the Federal Government. By the terms of the act, as amended, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, or in the administration of justice: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study of legal developments with respect to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; and investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

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**HATE GROUPS IN MICHIGAN: A SHAM OR A SHAME**  
A report prepared by the Michigan Advisory  
Committee to the United States Commission on  
Civil Rights

**ATTRIBUTION:**

The findings and recommendations contained in this report are those of the Michigan Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights and, as such, are not attributable to the Commission. This report has been prepared by the State Advisory Committee for submission to the Commission, and will be considered by the Commission in formulating its recommendations to the President and the Congress.

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Michigan Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights  
March 1982

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John Hope III, Acting Staff Director

Dear Commissioners:

The Michigan Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in fulfillment of its mandate, is pleased to transmit to you this report, Hate Groups in Michigan: A Sham or a Shame.

The Committee's report is the result of investigations conducted by this Advisory Committee, including a fact-finding meeting in Detroit in the fall of 1981.

While the numerical strength of hate groups seems to remain minimal in Michigan, the acts of violence inspired by bigotry and racial or religious prejudice have increased dramatically in the recent past.

The Committee attempted no quantitative description or in depth narrative of violent racist incidents. Instead, it concentrated on city, state and federal governments' preparedness for and response to those acts.

The Committee concludes its report with a series of recommendations to public officials and others, to prevent and remedy these pernicious activities.

We request that the Commission accept this report of its Michigan Advisory Committee, and adopt the recommendations.

Sincerely,

M. Howard Rienstra, Chairperson  
Michigan Advisory Committee

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CHAPTER I  
THE NATION'S CROSS TO BEAR

The unchecked inflow of mongrels, low-bloods and Jews has reached huge proportions and racial chaos and catastrophe will devastate our United States and exterminate our Aryan Race unless the unarmed invasion of the inferior and unassimilable is not only stopped, but totally reversed in a violent and massive racial purge.

The New Order - March 1971<sup>1</sup>

In 1975 David Dukes, then Grand Wizard of the Louisiana based Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, ran for state senator and polled one-third of the vote. In 1979 the Klan attracted 5,000 people at a rally held before the Decatur, Alabama city hall. Another rally one month later attracted 10,000. In 1980 then California State Grand Dragon Tom Metzger won a Democratic nomination for Congress. Also in 1980 an all white jury in Greensboro, North Carolina found six Klan and Nazi associates innocent of murder and riot charges in the slaying of five communists at a "Death to the Klan" rally. Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Justice reported a sharp increase in the number of complaints of racial harassment and assault. Two of the defendants have since been given



"Americanism Awards" for what Ed Fields, editor of the Marietta, Georgia newspaper Thunderbolt (a publication of the National States Rights Party) described as their "courageous and steadfast defense of our Constitutional rights." Fields labelled their acquittal "a great victory for white people everywhere." A few para-military camps have sprung up around the country in which Klan members are trained in the use of various weapons purportedly for defensive purposes and to prepare for what they view as the inevitable upcoming race war. Perhaps the most infamous is an Alabama camp called My Lai, in honor of Lt. William Calley.<sup>2</sup>

Organizations as disparate as the House Judiciary Committee, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League, and the National Education Association have expressed concern over the prevalence of racially and religiously motivated criminal violence. Among the evidence which is cited is a significant increase in Klan membership nationwide since 1974, an increase in the instances of Klan instigated racial harassment brought to the attention of the Community Relations Service, Department of Justice, from 44 in 1979 to 126 in 1981, and the conviction of at least 23 Klansmen since 1978 for violations of Federal civil rights laws.<sup>3</sup>

Equally if not more problematic is the apparently increasing legitimacy of, and tolerance for, individuals and groups that expressly preach racial and religious hatred while advocating violence to vent that hatred. The Ku Klux Klan and Nazis may be the most widely recognized names of such hate groups, but there are many imitators. Throughout the country, individuals and groups not affiliated with any Klan or Nazi organization have borrowed their symbols (e.g. swastika, burning cross) and perpetrated acts of bigotry and violence long associated with these two groups.<sup>4</sup> Some observers downplay the significance of these acts, referring to them as pranks acted out by unknowing teenagers. To others, including Gilbert G. Pompa, Director of the Community Relations Service of the U. S. Department of Justice, this is not at all the case.

Let me assure you that my agency does not regard these cross-burnings and intimidations, defacements, and other hate acts as pranks committed by a bunch of beer-drinking kids on a Saturday night. They are atrocities that are calculated and committed by haters of Jews, Hispanics, Blacks, Asian Americans, and other minorities

-- haters who are determined to destroy the social fabric and individual freedom that bind our nation together.<sup>5</sup>

In light of these developments, in 1981 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights launched its Project on Bigotry and Violence. The objectives are to: describe the nature, extent, and frequency of racially and religiously motivated violence (e.g. assault, terrorism, vandalism, intimidation); elicit the views of community leaders regarding the social conditions that might give rise to such violence (e.g. unemployment, disinvestment, technological and occupational change, demographic change, inflation, recession); and evaluate the responses of community leaders to the organizations and conditions that promote bigotry and violence.<sup>6</sup>

Acts of racially and religiously motivated violence have been widely reported in the state of Michigan. Among the incidents reported in the past three years are the following:

Ronald Bishop, Ray Echlin, Richard Johnson and Donald Johnson were sentenced to prison terms from one to four years for plotting to kill a

black man outside a local bar and for attempting murder by firing automatic weapons into the house of an interracial family in Detroit. Bishop, Grand Dragon of the Michigan Klan, is known to have trained at the Texas para-military camp of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Cynthia Steel, a 30 year old black woman, lost four fingers when she tried to defuse a pipe bomb thrown through the window of her kitchen. Police said her family had been the target of harassment in recent weeks, apparently because her home is located in a predominantly white neighborhood in Detroit. Three men were arrested and charged with assault with intent to murder and additional explosives violations.

The David Allen family was forced to move from its Romulus home due to vandalism and fires. One of the vandals, Richard Johnson who headed the Klan in Fenton, was sentenced to one year in prison.

Flint JOURNAL reporter Dan Gearino worked undercover as a Klan member and found that several leaders of the Michigan tax revolt movement have links with the Klan and similar groups like the Nazis and Minutemen. After a meeting called ostensibly to discuss tax resistance George Kindred offered for sale several racist pamphlets also offered in Klan and Nazi publications. Willard Coulter advocated lynchings in the streets as do other authors of Klan materials. And Robert Miles urged compilation of "enemies lists" including all Federal officials, particularly IRS agents.

Crosses were burned and gunshots were fired into the windows of the homes of two black families in Battle Creek.

A "survival" show was held in Jackson at which racist and anti-semitic remarks were made by a speaker brought in from Indiana.

A small group of Nazis held marches at an Israel independence day parade in Southfield, in downtown Detroit and in Birmingham.

At Cass Technical High School where the student body is 81 percent black, a white student painted swastikas and "KKK" on lockers. At the Ford Dearborn assembly plant two foremen painted the letters "KKK" on their regulation hard-hats.

A swastika, the letters "KKK" and the word "WHITE" were spray painted on a city water tank in Baldwin.

"KKK," "White Power," and "Niggers" were some of the phrases spray painted on the New Creation Church in a predominantly white Detroit neighborhood shortly after a black congregation moved into the facility.

Gerald Carlson, who has links to both the Klan and Nazis, won 53,000 votes as a Republican candidate for Congress. Two years later he ran again and attracted a negligible number of voters. His campaign stand included diatribes against blacks living in Detroit, Toledo, South Bend, and Chicago, whom he sees eventually pillaging the local predominantly white countryside. He also theorizes that violence-prone blacks cause white male homosexuality by attacking white women, gaining protection of law, and fomenting ensuing marital discord.<sup>7</sup>

In light of these reports, the Michigan Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted an investigation of racially and religiously motivated criminal violence in conjunction with the Commission's

national project and investigations launched by other advisory committees around the country. In its investigation the committee reviewed newspaper reports, studies issued by several public and private agencies, data provided by the Community Relations Service, and statements by community leaders in both the public and private sectors around the state. In addition, the committee conducted a one day fact-finding meeting in Detroit at which local, state, and federal officials described their agencies' responses to expressions of criminal violence rooted in bigotry and offered recommendations to curtail the phenomenon.

The following chapter examines the issue of hate group activity in Michigan, focusing on the viewpoints of public officials at all levels of government. The final chapter reports the committee's major findings and recommendations for minimizing hate group activity and its devastating consequences.

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- <sup>1</sup>Cited in KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT, Mar. 1981, p. 4.
- <sup>2</sup>Roy Levy Williams, President, Detroit Urban League, Written Testimony Regarding the Activities of "Hate Groups" as Submitted to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Michigan Advisory Committee, Sept. 25, 1981. (hereafter cited as Urban League Statement). KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT, Apr. 1981, p. 1. "The KKK Goes Military," NEWSWEEK, Oct. 6, 1980. The American Jewish Committee, "Anti-Semitism Today: A Frank Analysis," May 15, 1981.
- <sup>3</sup>Urban League statement. New Detroit, Inc. Statement on Community Concern Over Racial and Religious Violence, July 2, 1981. Gilbert G. Pompa, Director, Community Relations Service, remarks at the annual meeting of the National Association of Human Rights Workers, Oct. 16, 1981, (hereafter cited as Pompa statement).
- <sup>4</sup>Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, "Facts," Nov. 1979, p. 11.
- <sup>5</sup>Pompa statement.
- <sup>6</sup>Commission on Civil Rights, BUDGET ESTIMATE TO THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 1982, p. 35.
- <sup>7</sup>These incidents were reported in the following publications: March through June 1981 issues of KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT. Michigan Department of Civil Rights, "Hate Organizations in Michigan That Foment Racial and Religious Violence: Fact and Fiction," Sept. 22, 1981. Newspaper articles from the DETROIT FREE PRESS and MICHIGAN CHRONICLE (Commission Files).

## Chapter II

## THE MICHIGAN PERSPECTIVE

I think at this time we have a situation where a very small minority is violating the civil rights of a great number of people...we are greatly concerned that we are creating a situation where those people who have been on the borderline, not racists or generally inclined to take any overt action on their own, get pushed over the line and they become racists, not extremists perhaps....

- Kenneth Bell, City Commissioner, Battle Creek<sup>1</sup>

Detroit is a tough town...the message that we want to send out loud and clear is...that we will not tolerate these things.

- Alexander N. Luvall, Special Assistant to the Mayor, City of Detroit.

Violence and Bigotry - Scope of the Problem

Michigan officials do not agree on the extent to which organized racially or religiously motivated criminal violence has occurred in the state and whether or not such activity has increased in recent years. Some see an increase, others a decrease. Some see an increase in individual acts but claim there is no problem with organized group violence. Yet virtually all acknowledge that racially and religiously motivated violence is a serious problem. Despite the diverse assessments of the nature and extent of the problem, there is a general consensus on its causes and the remedial steps which should be taken by public officials at all levels of government.



Perhaps the most explicit assertion of such activity was provided by U.S. Attorney Leonard R. Gilman whose office successfully prosecuted Bishop, Echlin, Johnson, and Johnson for the shooting incident at the Detroit bar described in the previous chapter. Gilman succinctly stated, "I do see an increase recently in the violence by so-called hate groups."<sup>2</sup> Others who have offered similar observations include: Agnes Bryant, Executive Director of the Detroit Department of Human Rights; Walter Douglas, President of New Detroit; Ronald Quincy, Special Assistant to Governor William G. Milliken; and Noel Haere, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF).<sup>3</sup> As Haere concluded, "The way we see it here in the state of Michigan, the KKK is coming out more in the open and is aligning itself with the Nazi party here in Detroit called the SS Action Group, due to their similar views on blacks, Jews, Communists and so forth."<sup>4</sup>

In response to what BATF perceived to be a re-emergence of "right-wing militant groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party,"<sup>5</sup> a terrorist extremist project was launched in 1979 to detect and prevent criminal acts by groups which violate those laws under BATF's jurisdiction. The Bureau's primary

responsibility is to reduce the misuse of firearms and explosives. During the 18 months covering fiscal year 1980 and the first six months of fiscal 1981, 14 Klan members or sympathizers were recommended for prosecution on firearms violations while new investigations have been launched on 19 others.<sup>6</sup>

Other officials in Michigan are not convinced there has been any increase in organized violence on the part of hate groups. According to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights there is no substantial organized hate group activity or increase in racially or religiously motivated violence. Katherine Blackwell, chairperson of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission which sets policy for the Department, said, for example, that "Detroit area group actions seem to be the output of no more than 12 people. These activities include three marches, lasting a total of 15 minutes, and the attempted shooting of a black man at a westside bar."<sup>7</sup> While both the Commission and the Department acknowledge the existence of violence directed at racial and religious minorities, they attribute such violence to the actions of a few individuals, frequently mimicking the Klan or the Nazis, but not as part of any organized group.<sup>8</sup>

Outside of Detroit, officials are even less certain of any organized hate group activity. Despite the occurrence of a few well publicized incidents, officials do not perceive a significant increase in racially or religiously motivated criminal violence. William Lucas, Sheriff of Wayne County whose major responsibility is those communities outside Detroit, said "In that area, there has been minimal activity as far as racial activity is concerned."<sup>9</sup> Edward Ritenour, Chief of Police of Southfield, a Detroit suburb, said "I don't see an increase in the city of Southfield."<sup>10</sup> City Commissioner Kenneth Bell maintained, "I really believe that in the city of Battle Creek we do not have a problem."<sup>11</sup> And Jon R. Olson, Sheriff of Calhoun County, where Battle Creek is located, concluded in reference to his jurisdiction as well as Kalamazoo and Jackson counties that "purely racially motivated or religiously motivated problems, since the late 1960's, middle-late '60's have been on the decrease."<sup>12</sup>

Wayne Davis, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Operations in Michigan, did not believe his data supported any conclusion regarding the increase or decrease of racial or religious violence. He explained that the FBI conducts civil rights investigations as part of its

responsibility to investigate allegations of conspiracies against or deprivation of the rights of U.S. citizens. In addition, the FBI can conduct domestic security investigations to ascertain information on the activities of individuals or groups which will involve the use of force or violence and the violation of Federal law to overthrow or interfere with the work of the government or to deprive citizens of their rights under law. Davis acknowledged his office had conducted 167 civil rights investigations between January and August of 1981 compared to just 111 during the same months of 1980. Nationally the increase has been from under 8,000 in 1979 to 8,600 in 1980 with a projection of 9,000 to 10,000 for 1981.<sup>13</sup> Yet these investigations cover a wide range of alleged civil rights violations. When asked if he believed that racially or religiously motivated violence was increasing he responded:

As far as investigating groups or being in a position to tell you whether racially or religiously motivated violence by groups has increased, that would be very, very difficult to do. We know that there has been some increase in activities of groups like the Nazi Party and the Ku Klux Klan, but we know that by virtue of what has been printed in the news media.<sup>14</sup>

Davis went on to say:

I would observe that what we are seeing, perhaps, is more overt demonstration type

activities by groups, organizations that espouse racial and religious hatred...we don't see evidence of a swing from actions by individuals to actions by groups.<sup>15</sup>

Even among those officials who do not see a significant increase, or any increase at all, in organized hate group activity within their communities, many recognize that bigotry and just occasional outbursts of racially or religiously motivated violence are serious problems. For example, while minimizing the prevalence and denying any significant growth in such violence, Blackwell expressed her concern for "a resurgence of racist attitudes and an apparent willingness on the part of many in our society to behave in a racist fashion with a corresponding increase in tolerance for such behavior...it is a serious problem in our country. It is a serious problem in our state."<sup>16</sup> To focus on organized activity, however, misses a critical point. As New Detroit argued:

There has also been violence directed against minority group citizens committed by individuals who are not members of or affiliated with a group or organization. Some writers have referred to these people as 'imitators.' However, no individual or group has the right to commit acts of criminal violence against other citizens. The victim is still harmed whether the violence is committed by organized groups or independent individuals.<sup>17</sup>

Violence and Bigotry - Causes

Few observers deny the gravity of racially and religiously motivated criminal violence. In Michigan some consensus has been reached by public officials regarding the causes of such behavior.

Virtually every study or statement on racially or religiously motivated criminal violence in the last few years points to the recent economic downturn as one cause. As job opportunities decline while inflation rises, people become anxious and fearful. An environment is created that breeds scapegoating, which often takes the forms of racism and anti-Semitism. According to the U.S. Department of Justice:

It is the consensus of Klan observers that the present and continuing economic downswing has created an environment in which those whites who are attracted to the racism of the Klan will find that blacks and minorities (such as Southeast Asian Boat People and the more recent Cuban refugees) will be competing with them for fewer jobs and less money. The appeal of the Klan to this group of whites is growing and will continue to do so.<sup>18</sup>

In its 1981 study of anti-Semitism the public opinion research firm of Yankelovich, Skelly and White

drew some disturbing parallels with the current state of the U.S. economy:

Indeed, many of the factors associated with the growth of European anti-Semitism in the 1930's have re-emerged: economic turmoil, the worst inflation in a generation and increasing political conservatism in the United States and in several European countries.<sup>19</sup>

Private organizations in Michigan ranging from New Detroit to the Detroit Urban League have drawn similar conclusions.<sup>20</sup> Public officials including U.S. Attorney Gilman, Wayne County Sheriff Lucas and representatives of the Detroit Department of Human Rights, the Saginaw Human Relations Department, and the Detroit Mayor's office have also pointed to the depressed economy.<sup>21</sup> As Alexander Luvall, Special Assistant to the Mayor of Detroit observed, "when the economy is bad, it seems like the Klan starts marching again."<sup>22</sup>

Compounding the intolerance generated by economic woes is a growing belief that racism and anti-Semitism are more "acceptable," according to many public officials and private analysts. They argue that a message is being delivered from Washington that individuals and groups can "get away" with more explicit expressions of bigotry. The

reduction, and in some cases elimination, of many Federal social programs implemented initially to help minorities and the poor in general such as the Community Services Administration, legal aid, and food stamps is being interpreted as evidence of the current administration's lack of concern. A perception of retreat in Federal civil rights enforcement in such areas as voting rights, school desegregation, and affirmative action suggests to many that wrongdoings will be ignored.<sup>23</sup> A striking example is the administration's proposal to abolish the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, viewed by some as the Federal government's most effective weapon in the fight against Klan and Nazi terrorism.<sup>24</sup> Sheriff Lucas captured the essence of this concern when he stated:

The feeling is that it is a time the pendulum has swung back away from a liberal to a very conservative time, and that the society will tacitly approve of a conservative trend and...of people who say, "You've had enough," as far as minorities and women are concerned, "You've had your day, now give some back"...So yes there is that feeling...that it will be done with full approval of society.<sup>25</sup>

Another phenomenon which can suggest official sanction for bigotry is the absence of quick and effective response to incidents by police. As the Michigan Department of Civil Rights asserted, "Klan violence could



have been prevented by early police intervention in neighborhood harassment. Inaction implied to Klan members that their actions were acceptable."<sup>26</sup>

Southfield Police Chief Ritenour described one of the ironies of police work in discussing how his department prepared for the demonstration that occurred in 1981 at the thirty-third Israeli anniversary celebration. In order to protect the first amendment rights of all citizens without interfering in the celebration, Ritenour called the leaders of the Nazi party into his office and explained precisely what they would be permitted to do. The demonstrators followed his instruction and the celebration occurred without serious incident. Ritenour observed:

I thought it was rather comical, in a sense, that here I am German, and I'm protecting two Nazis who are really Irishmen from the Jews: and I said, this could only happen in Southfield, the All-American City.<sup>27</sup>

Recent limitations placed on intelligence gathering activities impede efforts of law enforcement agencies, thus encouraging hate group activity, according to some law enforcement officers.<sup>28</sup> FBI's Davis and U. S. Attorney Gilman maintain regulations governing domestic

security investigations implemented in 1976 by then Attorney General Edward H. Levy virtually preclude use of informants.<sup>29</sup> Davis claimed:

I think it's an historical fact that the FBI pretty much decimated the Ku Klux Klan through the use of informants and other investigative techniques prior to 1976...In those days we could have told you where every klavern of the Ku Klux Klan was in Michigan, who the members were, and the first names of each of the children as well as the dog. Now, as a result of the implementation of those guidelines, we are restricted from conducting domestic security investigations unless we get certain specific information of certain intended violations of Federal law or certain violations of Federal law that have occurred.<sup>30</sup>

Within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) there is some disagreement on how the 1976 guidelines affect the use of informants and the conduct of domestic security investigations. In its recent report of the Ku Klux Klan and Federal enforcement responsibilities DOJ's Civil Rights Division noted the FBI's interpretation of the guidelines and proceeded to refute that interpretation:

We believe that the extant guidelines would not impair the Bureau -- and adequate facts exist to authorize a substantial increase in the use of informants and undercover agents by the FBI into Klan activities. Thus, informants may only be authorized:

on the basis of specific and articulable facts giving reason to believe that an individual or group is or may be engaged in activities which will involve the

use of force in violation of Federal law...  
(Attorney General Guidelines).

If this standard does not describe the activities of the Klan in many parts of the country, we seriously misunderstand the facts of the law or the Guidelines or... all of the above.<sup>31</sup>

The extent to which racial and religious hate groups represent a genuine danger is compounded by the role of the media, according to some officials. For example the Michigan Department of Civil Rights claims, "The Klans in Michigan are media phenomena. Given limited exposure, they will have a difficult time recruiting members...Neo-Nazis like media coverage. In the absence of that coverage, they are likely to be dormant or inactive."<sup>32</sup> Often the media exaggerate the significance of such groups or give them inordinate attention, charge some officials. A frequently cited example is the celebration of the thirty-third anniversary of Israel. While over 3,000 attended the celebration most of the media attention went to the fewer than 20 Nazis who briefly demonstrated.<sup>33</sup> Michigan Civil Rights Commissioner Blackwell cited an example where one person in Fenton was reported as a group of 50.<sup>34</sup> The hate groups themselves may not be the only ones who benefit from such media bias. Some observers maintain anti-hate groups also benefit because the more bigotry is exaggerated, the greater the

justification for their work.<sup>35</sup>

#### Violence and Bigotry - The Solutions

Some of the actions necessary to eliminate violence and bigotry according to these officials are implicit in their assessment of the causes. For example, an economy characterized by increasing job opportunities and reduced inflation would undercut much of the appeal of groups espousing racism and anti-Semitism. Precisely how to turn the economy around, however, is a major issue and source of controversy in and of itself, and lies beyond the scope of this report.

If one cause of increasing racially and religiously motivated violence is a subtle message from Washington that such behavior will be tolerated, if not accepted, then an appropriate response is an explicit message that this is in fact not the case. President Reagan has stated that society will not stand for this kind of conduct and has referred to racial and religious hate organizations as "groups in the backwater of American life who still hold perverted notions of what America is all about."<sup>36</sup> Given the message many officials claim is implied in recent cutbacks in Federal social programs and civil rights

enforcement, the current administration may have sent mixed messages to the American public.

Effective law enforcement is viewed as critical to deter hate group activity. As Luvall asserted, "Enforcement of already existing laws will go far in curbing the enthusiasm of hate groups to flaunt their propaganda and pursue their activities."<sup>37</sup> A key dimension to effective law enforcement is a prompt response to any reported incident. Several Michigan officials commended the Detroit Police Department for controlling incidents, and keeping them from escalating, precisely because of their quick response.<sup>38</sup> Two factors were identified that contribute to prompt action by police. Thomas Peloso, Chief Deputy of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights suggested that a police force which is representative of the community it serves is more likely to be motivated to respond effectively, and he cited Detroit as a good example.<sup>39</sup> Sheriffs Lucas and Olson emphasized the importance of discipline within a police force.<sup>40</sup> The importance of effective law enforcement was succinctly stated by New Detroit: "There is no substitute for swift and certain apprehension and punishment for acts of crime if deterrence is to be effective."<sup>41</sup>

Prompt and effective response to reported incidents requires advance preparation. In anticipation of potential disruptions, the city of Saginaw drew together representatives of the Human Relations Commission, law enforcement agencies, business leaders, media representatives and other community leaders to develop an appropriate response. An emergency mobilization plan for police personnel was created which spelled out lines of authority, operational procedures, use of force policies, procedures for arresting juveniles and adults, where individuals would be temporarily held, and guidelines governing other contingencies. In describing this plan Marjorie L. Conner, Director of the Saginaw Human Relations Commission, concluded:

It is imperative that the full force of existing constitutional guarantees, ordinances, statutes and laws as well as civil suits be used to preserve the God-given rights of every American citizen to pursue life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in an atmosphere free of hatred, violence and intimidation.<sup>42</sup>

The belief that DOJ's 1976 guidelines governing domestic surveillance has hampered FBI investigations suggests that in the opinion of some Federal officials relaxation of those guidelines would enhance the effectiveness of Federal law enforcement efforts. U.S.

Attorney Gilman stated, "if they would allow domestic surveillance of groups that advocate racial hatred and the use of violence to implement their view, that would be enough...to take care of two groups that I can think of."<sup>43</sup> However, as indicated above, other DOJ officials contend these guidelines do permit the kind of necessary surveillance the FBI claims is precluded by these rules.

Restraint on the part of the media was noted by many officials as essential if those hate groups which rely on publicity for their existence are to be put out of business. As Blackwell argued, "The news media must always indicate the small numbers of persons involved in such activities, and within the constraints of covering the news ensure that they do not glorify inadvertently these activities."<sup>44</sup> She also cited an example of a positive response from the media. Thanks in part to the cooperation of the media with the Mayor's office and the Board of Education, Blackwell contended the city of Detroit enjoyed "one of the most peaceful first day, first week busing that has ever taken place in our country" at the same time when Boston was having a difficult problem compounded by reports of many incidents by the media.<sup>45</sup>

Another recommended approach is education. The Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the Detroit Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Department have called for the teaching of racial and religious minority experiences, focusing on the effects of racism and anti-Semitism, in public and private schools.<sup>46</sup> The Detroit public schools have already taken such action. Studies of racial and religious hatred is currently being built into the curriculum for all students from kindergarten through grade twelve. Among the subjects to be included are the philosophy, origins, institutions, and personalities of the Nazi movement of the 1930's and 1940's; persecution and genocide of the Jews; mass killings of Armenians; history of the Atlantic slave trade; and the dispossessing and killing of American Indians.<sup>47</sup>

The laws of many states have long prohibited violence directed against persons and property. Several recent legislative initiatives have been taken in states around the country specifically aimed at racially and religiously motivated violence. Texas, Rhode Island, Florida, California, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon, Georgia, Washington, and Michigan are some of the states that have either passed or are debating various



legislative proposals. Among the provisions of these proposals are the following: cross burnings would be declared a felony and punishable with fines up to \$5,000 and prison terms up to three years; the wearing of masks would be prohibited by individuals or groups who engage in any illegal act, deprive others of their rights, or harass or intimidate others; desecration of religious symbols or a person's private property with graffiti would be punishable with prison terms up to two years; meetings for the purpose of doing or advocating violence would be punishable with fines up to \$5,000 and prison terms up to one year for the first offense and \$15,000 for subsequent offenses; and teaching the use of firearms or other explosives for the purpose of creating a civil disorder or assembling for such purposes would be punishable with fines up to \$5,000 and prison terms up to one year. Other initiatives include formation of a Governor's Civil Tension Task Force in West Virginia geared toward responding quickly to any incident with the various resources of the state. And in Maryland public and private groups have formed the Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism (COVE) to mobilize support for victims and to aid law enforcement agencies.<sup>48</sup>

Proposals that prohibit the teaching of the use of firearms or assembling for that purpose are aimed primarily at the para-military training camps operated by some Ku Klux Klan organizations and other groups with similar political viewpoints. Such a bill has been introduced in the Michigan legislature. The key sections read as follows:

A person shall not teach or demonstrate to another person the use, application, or preparation of any firearm, any explosive or incendiary device, or any technique capable of causing injury or death to an individual if that person knows, has reason to know, or intends that what is taught or demonstrated will be used in, or in furtherance of, a civil disorder.

A person shall not assemble with 1 or more persons for the purpose of training with, practicing with, or being instructed in the use of any firearm, any explosive or incendiary device, or any technique capable of causing injury or death to an individual if that person or those persons intend to use such a firearm, device, or technique in, or for the furtherance of, a civil disorder.

A person who violates this section shall be guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or a fine of not more than \$5,000, or both.<sup>49</sup>

While recognizing the necessity of protecting the rights of victims of racially or religiously motivated violence, one city official expressed a concern for

protecting the rights of the alleged aggressor. Battle Creek City Commissioner Kenneth Bell fears that non-racists could "get pushed over the line and...become racists"<sup>50</sup> if these rights are not protected as well. He recounted a shooting incident in Battle Creek which in his opinion, resulted in that city being unfairly maligned nationwide as a violent community which did not adequately protect the rights of minorities. As a result of the activities of one small group of people, Bell claimed police officers have been wrongfully accused of brutality. Though not denying some problems in this area, Bell maintains they have been inflated. He fears a backlash on the part of the majority of people in the community if these charges and misperceptions continue. Therefore, he called for complete and open investigation of any allegations of harassment to assure that, when substantiated, those actions do not continue, but also when they are unsubstantiated to assure that innocent people are not maligned and inaccurate reports are not disseminated throughout the community.<sup>51</sup>

Violence and Bigotry: Prevention or Punishment

At the Detroit fact-finding meeting Sheriff Lucas mused over the irony of how little effort and money is spent on preventive measures while resources seem to suddenly become available after the problems have taken their toll:

...We are a nation of reactors. We are going to let things drift, we let things happen, we see it coming, and we'll discuss it, we know what is coming; and particularly in my line of work, you know exactly what's going to happen, you tell people about it in advance, and they pooh-pooh it, they put it off, and then the catastrophe comes because no one can find the funds and no one has the interest. And damn it, after it happens, then somehow money is found and a half-way attempt is made to put it back together.<sup>52</sup>

When the "half-way attempt" fails, many individuals and institutions are blamed, but as Police Chief Ritenour argued, police in general are often the last line of defense:

When all the social programs and the schools and the home environment have failed, the policeman has to come along and handle it...When all these programs and the economic issues and everything else fails, the policeman's out there to clean it up; and when he fails, then you're really in trouble.<sup>53</sup>

The consensus of those who provided information to the Michigan State Advisory Committee is that many communities in Michigan and around the nation are experiencing trouble with groups and individuals espousing racial and religious hatred. Preventive measures must be implemented although it is likely that some persons will continue to engage in unlawful racially or religiously motivated conduct. Therefore, a rational social policy must incorporate both preventive and punitive measures to ensure that the devastating consequences of violence grounded in bigotry will finally be eliminated.

- 1 Testimony before the Michigan Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Detroit, Sept. 25, 1981 (hereafter cited as Transcript), pp. 252, 253.
- 2 Transcript, p. 28.
- 3 Transcript, pp. 39, 84, 171, 172, 186.
- 4 Transcript, p. 39.
- 5 Transcript, p. 20.
- 6 Transcript, pp. 19-25, 60-62.
- 7 Transcript, p. 238.
- 8 Transcript, pp. 76, 89, 238-240. Michigan Department of Civil Rights, "Hate Organizations in Michigan That Foment Racial and Religious Violence: Fact and Fiction," Sept. 22, 1981 (hereafter cited as "Fact and Fiction").
- 9 Transcript, p. 122.
- 10 Transcript, p. 188.
- 11 Transcript, pp. 250, 251.
- 12 Transcript, p. 115.
- 13 Transcript, pp. 15-19, 52.
- 14 Transcript, pp. 33, 34.
- 15 Transcript, p. 45.
- 16 Transcript, p. 241.
- 17 New Detroit, Inc., Statement on Community Concern Over Racial and Religious Violence (hereafter cited as New Detroit Statement), July 2, 1981, p. 2.
- 18 U.S. Department of Justice, "Ku Klux Klan Activities and Federal Enforcement Responsibilities in 1980," 1981 (hereafter cited as Justice Report), p. 8.
- 19 "Anti-Semitism in the United States, Volume I, The Summary Report," prepared for the American Jewish Committee by Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc., July 1981, p. 1.
- 20 New Detroit statement, p. 2. Roy Levy Williams, President, Detroit Urban League, Written Testimony Regarding the Activities of "Hate Groups" as submitted to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Michigan Advisory Committee, Sept. 25, 1981, (hereafter cited as Urban League statement) p. 2.
- 21 Transcript, pp. 31, 102, 126, 177, 215, 247.
- 22 Transcript, p. 228.
- 23 Urban League statement, p. 4. Transcript, pp. 94, 125, 178, 216, 228.
- 24 KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT, Oct. 1981, p. 6.
- 25 Transcript, pp. 128, 129.
- 26 "Fact and Fiction," p. 1.
- 27 Transcript, pp. 229, 230.
- 28 Transcript, pp. 32-71, 220, 221.
- 29 Justice Report, p. 32, Appendix E.
- 30 Transcript, pp. 33, 48.
- 31 Justice Report, p. 36.
- 32 "Fact and Fiction," pp. 1, 11.

- 33 Transcript, pp. 180, 182, 251.
- 34 Transcript, p. 239.
- 35 "Fact and Fiction," p. 10.
- 36 Gilbert G. Pompa, Director, Community Relations Service, Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Human Rights Workers, Oct. 16, 1981. (hereafter cited as Pompa statement).
- 37 Transcript, p. 124.
- 38 Transcript, pp. 59, 60, 81, 99.
- 39 Transcript, pp. 100, 101.
- 40 Transcript, pp. 136, 142.
- 41 New Detroit statement, p. 3.
- 42 Transcript, pp. 247-249.
- 43 Transcript, p. 70.
- 44 Transcript, p. 242.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 "Fact and Fiction," pp. 15, 16. Transcript, p. 241. Letter from Agnes H. Bryant, Director, Detroit Human Rights Department, to Clark G. Roberts, Director, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Midwestern Regional Office, January 13, 1982.
- 47 Transcript, pp. 174-176.
- 48 KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT, Apr. 1981, p. 8. KLANWATCH INTELLIGENCE REPORT, June 1981, p. 4. Pompa statement.
- 49 H.B. 4866, Mich. 83rd Leg. Ses. (1981).
- 50 Transcript, 253.
- 51 Transcript, pp. 250-272.
- 52 Transcript, pp. 157, 158.
- 53 Transcript, p. 232.

## Chapter III

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Racially and religiously motivated violence perpetrated by hate groups and individuals throughout the United States has taken lives, destroyed property, and raised serious questions regarding the nation's commitment to basic civil and human rights. As serious as these acts of violence are, equally problematic is the growing belief that overt bigotry has become socially acceptable. The electoral success recently enjoyed by some individuals espousing bigotry and violence fuels the growing sense of legitimacy these groups have attained.

Michigan has not been immune from these problems. While public officials in the state differ in their assessment of the nature and extent of such behavior, virtually all agree that bigotry and violence are serious problems in Michigan. A general consensus has also been reached regarding the causes of bigotry and violence and what can be done to root out these attitudes and the destruction they bring from the social fabric of the state.



As a result of its investigation, including the fact-finding meeting in Detroit, the Michigan Advisory Committee offers to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights the following findings and recommendations. The Committee urges the Commission to accept these findings and recommendations and make them its own, and to incorporate them into the Commission's own study on this issue. The Committee also urges the Commission to convey these findings and recommendations to the appropriate federal agencies.

#### Findings

1. Racially and religiously motivated violence in Michigan is a serious problem, one which will be exacerbated if specific and direct actions are not taken by public officials at all levels of government.
2. Officials can expect problems associated with racially and religiously motivated violence to increase if the Michigan economy should slip into an even deeper recession and further cuts in state programs become necessary.
3. Reductions in Federal funds for domestic social programs and the retreat in Federal civil rights

enforcement efforts may have given a signal to many that acts of overt bigotry will be ignored, if not condoned, by society. Policy statements to the contrary have created mixed signals but have not eliminated the message that the federal government will tolerate acts of violent bigotry.

4. Prompt response by police to reported incidents of racially and religiously motivated violence is essential to keep them from escalating. Enforcement of existing laws ensuring citizens their constitutional rights and prohibiting the misuse of firearms can significantly minimize the appeal of racial and religious hate groups and acts of overt bigotry.

- The Detroit Police Department has been particularly effective in responding promptly to reported incidents, in part because the racial and ethnic composition of the personnel reflects that of the community they serve.

5. Use of informants and domestic surveillance by the FBI have been effective deterrents to hate group activity. Guidelines implemented by the Attorney General in 1976 governing such investigative techniques have created

conflicting interpretations within the Department of Justice on the use of these tactics.

- The FBI claims the 1976 guidelines virtually preclude domestic surveillance or the use of informants.
- The Department's Civil Rights Division claims the guidelines do not impede utilization of these tactics for purposes of investigating the Ku Klux Klan and similar organizations.

6. The media may have given undue attention to hate groups in some instances, perhaps contributing to some proliferation of their activities. However bigotry and violence constitute serious dangers to the community that will not disappear simply with more "responsible" media coverage.

7. Education is critical in any effort to combat bigotry and violence. The state of Michigan has taken an important step by planning to incorporate into all public school curricula studies on the holocaust, American slavery, mistreatment of American Indians and the meaning of discrimination against minorities in general.

8. Legislation has been introduced and enacted in some states which declare cross burnings and related forms of property damage and harassment as felonies, prohibit wearing of masks by those engaged in illegal acts, prohibit meetings for purposes of advocating violence, and prohibit para-military training camps where instruction is provided on the use of firearms for the purpose of creating civil disorders.

- In Michigan the only proposal introduced in the legislature is a bill banning para-military training camps.

#### Recommendations

1. State and local officials should take every precaution to assure that if further budget cuts become necessary burdens do not fall inequitably on minorities and the poor in general.

2. All police and law enforcement agencies in Michigan should implement affirmative action plans, or carefully monitor previously implemented plans, to assure their work forces are representative of the communities they serve. If budget reductions necessitate layoffs, officials should

assure that personnel cuts do not eliminate progress made through affirmative action taken in recent years.

3. Cities should develop procedures for promptly responding to and fully investigating any incident of racial or religious harassment or violence. Officers should be trained in those procedures, as well as in human relations in order to better understand the experiences and perceptions of the diverse racial and ethnic groups in their communities.

4. The Department of Justice and all divisions within that Department, including the FBI, should develop a precise understanding regarding when informants may be used and where domestic surveillance may be conducted.

5. The media should accurately reflect the activities of hate groups when reporting on them. Reports on activities of hate groups should not overshadow more significant events.

6. Public and private schools should incorporate into their curriculum at all grades studies of racial and religious discrimination; including the holocaust,