

LAW ENFORCEMENT SPECIAL REPORT

# Intelligence Report

PUBLISHED BY  
THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

ROLL CALL VIDEO  
ON RACIST SKINHEADS

DVD  
ENCLOSED

## RACIST SKINHEADS

UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

RACIST SKINHEAD MOVEMENT HISTORY // GLOSSARY // TIMELINE // SYMBOLS





# Skinheads in America

Racist skinheads are among the most dangerous radical-right threats facing law enforcement today. The products of a frequently violent and criminal subculture, these men and women, typically imbued with neo-Nazi beliefs about Jews, blacks, homosexuals and others, are also notoriously difficult to track. Organized into small, mobile “crews” or acting individually, skinheads tend to move around frequently and often without warning, even as they network and organize across regions. For law enforcement, this poses a particular problem in responding to crimes and conspiracies crossing multiple jurisdictions. As these extremists extend their reach across the country, it is vital that law enforcement officers who deal with them become familiar with the activities of skinheads nationwide.

What follows is an examination of the history and nature of the skinhead movement, prepared with the needs of law enforcement officers in mind, a glossary of common skinhead terms, a timeline, and a gallery of insignias and tattoos commonly used by racist skinheads.

## Intelligence Report

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# SKINHEADS IN AMERICA

The racist skinhead movement in the United States has entered its fourth decade. Since the first skinhead gangs surfaced in Texas and the Midwest in the early 1980s, this racist and violent subculture has established itself in dozens of states from coast to coast and has authored some of the country's most vicious hate crimes in memory, from arson to assault to murder. The racist skinheads' trademark style — shaved head, combat boots, bomber jacket, neo-Nazi and white power tattoos — has become a fixture in American culture.

The scowling skinhead has joined the hooded Klansman as an immediately recognizable icon of hate.

Unlike the Klan, racist skinhead culture is not native to the United States. And unlike the Klan, it is a truly global phenomenon, with skinhead gangs haunting major cities and towns in just about every white-majority country on earth. From Austria to Australia and Argentina to America, working-class youths can be found dressed in some local variation on the skinhead theme, espousing a crude worldview that is viciously anti-foreigner, anti-black, anti-gay, and anti-Semitic. In recent years, the Internet and cheap international airfares have allowed skinhead groups across the planet to communicate and organize in ways that would have shocked the original skinheads of

the 1960s and '70s, whose vision and turf was limited to the East London neighborhoods in which they grew up and lived.

The growth of the racist skinhead movement has mirrored the rise in non-white immigration to the West. As the skin hues of Europe and North America have darkened with steady post-World War II immigration from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, a nativist backlash has appeared in both mainstream and extremist forms. The skinhead movement is the most violent and ideologically crude form of this backlash. Depending on the country, racist skinheads may have shadowy ties to radical parties participating in electoral politics. Skinhead groups in the U.S. lack such connections, but for those unlucky enough to encounter

them on a darkened street, this does not make them any less fearsome.

## Origins

The first skinheads emerged in the late 1960s as just one of the many distinct youth cultures that flowered in postwar Britain. Taking elements of English "mod" and Jamaican immigrant fashion, these working-class London youths crafted an identity in self-conscious opposition to the middle-class "long-hairs." At various points in their early development, English skinheads positioned themselves as tough working-class counterpoints to foppish mods, long-haired hippies, mohawked punks and made-up goths.

The skinhead style first emerged as part of a non-racist and multiracial scene. White skinheads took on a persona that reflected admiration for and kinship with a new generation of working-class West Indian immigrants into the United Kingdom. Like the Jamaican immigrants of the time, the first skinheads were clean-cut, neat, and sharp-looking compared to the shaggier youth styles of the period. (White skinheads eventually lost their affinity for Jamaica as Rastafarian fashions became ascendant, with their overtones of black pride and pan-Africanism.)

Many early white skinheads were vaguely nationalistic and "proud to be British," but their deepest loyalties lay with their childhood chums and the local soccer team, not the "white race," as professed by today's racist skinheads. While known for their youthful

aggression, petty criminality, and soccer stadium violence, this activity was seen as born out of economic hardship and a general spirit of bully-boy rebellion — not blind race hatred. Indeed, the first skinhead music was reggae and ska, both black musical forms; the earliest targets of white skinheads' anger and homemade weapons were each other and rival soccer fans.

But a split between racist and non-racist skinheads was apparent and began deepening soon after the style was born. By the early '70s, skinhead attacks on South Asian immigrants in London — the infamous sport of “Paki bashing” — had become an international news story. These violent skinheads had not yet acquired the trappings of neo-Nazi costumes and ideology, but they were already acting like Hitler's goon squads, the brown shirts. One skinhead explained a typical “Paki bash” to a *Time* magazine journalist in 1970: “You go up to them and bump into them, and then you nut [forehead bash] them right, and then you hit them, and as they go down you give them a kicking, bash them with an iron bar, and take their watches and rings and things like that.”

More than 50 such attacks were reported within a span of weeks in 1970, triggering street protests by British South Asians. A definitive break between racist and non-racist skins had occurred.

During the early to mid-'70s, England's skinheads went into temporary decline. They experienced a revival in 1976, when a new generation of skinheads started earning a fresh reputation for violence through attacks on punks, homosexuals, and immigrants.

Fueling these attacks and cementing the new racist skinhead identity was increasing association with two neofascist political parties, the National Front and the British Movement. The latter, founded by longtime neo-Nazi Colin Jordan in 1968, did the most to stamp a swastika on the racist sector of the skinhead movement. The British Movement ran candidates in the 1974 U.K. general elections who espoused neo-Nazi ideas and wore swastikas while handing out party literature featuring the image

and words of Adolf Hitler. In 1975, the British Movement gained a charismatic leader in the form of Michael McLaughlin, who reached out to the racist skinheads and appealed to their sensibilities and skills by emphasizing violence and street-level hate.

Between the arrival of Michael McLaughlin in 1975 and the election of Margaret Thatcher as British prime minister in 1979, the first hardcore neo-Nazi skinheads were born.

### **Skinheads in the US.**

The neo-Nazi skinhead phenomenon spread quickly to the United States. By the early 1980s, skinhead activity was

reported in Texas and the Midwest, among other places. But the movement only started gaining national attention during the last third of the decade. It was then that skinhead gangs like the Dallas Hammerskins made a splash with violent racist attacks on immigrants and blacks.

The most important skinhead gang in raising the American movement's early profile was Chicago's CASH (Chicago Area Skin Heads), which made national headlines with a brutal 1987 crime spree that involved assaults on six Hispanic women, swastikas painted on three synagogues, and numerous incidents of vandalism to Jewish-owned business.



The leader of CASH was an ex-con and former member of the American Nazi Party named Clark Martell.

In the mid-1980s, Martell played the role of a skinhead Johnny Appleseed, performing around Chicago with his punk band Romantic Violence and passing out American Nazi Party newsletters and copies of *National Socialist Skinhead* magazine between his band's sets. Martell's neo-Nazi recruiting drive caught the attention of Chicago's numerous "traditional," or non-racist, skinheads, including a number of African Americans. (According to Chicago punk lore, the city's skinhead scene was founded by black, non-racist skins). Enjoying the

with his teenage son, John, Metzger sought to ground the dispersed movement in ideology and direct its wild and chaotic youthful energy into building smart, well-trained, and obedient street cells around the country. In 1988, Tom Metzger organized the first major hate rock festival in the U.S., Aryan Fest, in Oklahoma.

It was also in 1988 that Metzger's efforts bore their most bitter fruit. In November, WAR Youth representative Dave Mazella visited Portland, Ore., to train and guide members of a local skinhead crew, East Side White Pride. During this visit, a group of Portland skins under Mazella's tutelage attacked

After spreading throughout the South, Hammerskin-affiliated gangs began appearing on the east and west coasts in the early 1990s.

It was out of these geographically disparate Hammerskin gangs that Hammerskin Nation (HSN) was formed in 1994. The idea was to unite all of the regional Hammerskin groups into a national and even international force, with affiliated chapters in Europe. And for a while, the plan worked. Hammerskin Nation established itself as the most powerful skinhead organization in the country during the mid- and late '90s. At its peak, HSN directed nearly 30 chapters and ran a successful record label, publishing house, and website. The HSN symbol of two crossed hammers swept the skinhead scene. And an annual meeting and concert, Hammerfest, was launched in 1999, allowing HSN members from around the world to meet and organize. Throughout this period of Hammerskin ascendancy, the racist skinhead movement continued to grow and was responsible for hundreds of racially motivated crimes around the country. It was also during this period, in 1997, that Denver police officer Bruce Vander Jagt became the first American police officer killed in the line of duty by a racist skinhead.

Hammerskin dominance failed to outlast the decade, however. As early as 1999, Hammerskins around the country were complaining in private and on message boards about the heavy-handed and "elitist" leadership style of the organization's top officers. The number of HSN chapters dropped off, with new regional groups rising up and loudly asserting their independence. Chief among these renegade skinhead groups were, first, the Outlaw Hammerskins, and then the Hoosier State Skinheads in Indiana and the Ohio State Skinheads, which in 2004 merged to form the Vinlanders Social Club, a.k.a. the Vinlanders. In 2005, the Vinlanders hosted the first Blood & Honour USA Council, a unity meeting of regional skinhead crews also known as the Council 28 (because B is

## **The scowling skinhead has joined the hooded Klansman as an immediately recognizable icon of hate.**

advantage of vastly superior numbers, anti-racist crews such as Skinheads of Chicago (SHOC) routinely ganged up on CASH skins at shows and in the streets. "They grew out of what we are — the punk scene — so it's up to us to combat them," a member of the Chicago Anti-Racist Action (ARA) skinhead crew told the *Chicago Tribune*.

By the time Martell and the other five CASH skins were arrested for a gruesome 1987 attack on a former member, CASH had been more or less beaten into submission by anti-racist skins. But Martell had merely proven he was ahead of his time, and his defeat was local. When he first started recruiting for CASH, there were likely fewer than 200 racist skinheads in the United States. By 1989, when he was convicted of home invasion, aggravated battery, and robbery and sentenced to 11 years in prison, there were an estimated 3,000.

A major force behind this national growth spurt was Tom Metzger, a Fallbrook, Calif.-based former Klansman and longtime leader of the neo-Nazi group White Aryan Resistance (WAR). Around 1986, Metzger formed WAR Youth and launched an organized skinhead outreach campaign. Together

a group of Ethiopian immigrants in the middle of a street with steel-toed boots and a baseball bat. One of them, graduate student Mulugeta Seraw, died from his wounds. Although Metzger would later lose a bruising \$12.5 million lawsuit brought against his organization by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League — a suit that effectively wrecked WAR as an organization capable of putting skinheads into the street — he continues propaganda efforts to this day from a new base in Indiana. But Metzger's current operation is limited to a radio show and a website (resist.com) that is largely devoted to racist and anti-Semitic "humor."

The murder of Mulugeta Seraw was hardly unique during the American skinhead movement's growth years. Indeed, there were scores of brutal skinhead assaults around the country during the late '80s and early '90s, including the cold-blooded murders of black men in Birmingham, Ala., and Arlington, Texas.

Those responsible for these murders included members of the dreaded Confederate Hammerskins, a confederation of skinheads founded in Dallas in 1987.

the second letter of the alphabet and H the eighth), in Ohio. It is at this annual gathering that skins would, according to the Vinlanders web site, “meet yearly with other crews and exchange ideas and debate direction and tactics.” And drink lakes of beer, of course.

Incredibly violent, full of swagger, and loathe to take orders from anyone, the Vinlanders were thought to represent the future in a more decentralized skinhead scene. But in the first weeks of 2007, Vinlanders founder Brien James, a particularly violent racist, posted a notice on the group’s website announcing that the group was separating itself “from the racist movement.” The announcement explained: “We do not see anything positive being accomplished, for our nation or our people, by participating in the white racialist movement as it stands. We have attempted to change this movement from within and have not succeeded. It is our opinion that a large number of the people involved in the greater movement are paid informants, social outcasts, and general losers in life.”

But the fourth decade of skinheads in America finds skinhead groups growing. The number of skinhead groups has increased dramatically in recent years, totaling 133 by 2012. These new groups are defined by a violent gangster ethos that is only partly informed by racist and neo-Nazi ideology.

### **Music & Culture**

Along with exposure to extremist political parties and hate literature, music has always been a key element in the growth of the racist skinhead subculture. This is appropriate, as the original skinhead scene was based around clubs playing ska and reggae. The hard-driving rock-and-roll favored by today’s racist skinheads both exploits and channels the youthful energy of members and potential teenage recruits.

The importance of music in building the racist skinhead scene was apparent by the late ’70s, when a hate-rock scene exploded alongside the punk rock movement, spreading lyrics that were

anti-immigrant, anti-black, and anti-Semitic. Groups such as Skrewdriver, Skullhead, and No Remorse forged a common skinhead culture in sweaty, beer-soaked, makeshift concert halls, with lyrics professing brotherhood among whites and violent, uncompromising antagonism to outsiders of all kinds. The early hate-rock skinhead scene in Britain coalesced around what were known as the “Rock Against Communism” (RAC) concerts, the first of which was held in Leeds in 1978. RAC shows were organized in opposition to the earlier “Rock Against Racism” concerts, a series of musical events meant to counter growing racist currents in English culture. A subgenre of punk that often veered toward racism was known as Oi!, which soon became global (if not completely accurate) shorthand for skinhead music.

By the mid-1980s, a racist skinhead culture defined by loud hate-rock, cases of cheap beer, bloody “boot parties” directed against immigrants and others, and the flagrant display of neo-Nazi iconography and paraphernalia had spread to Western Europe and North America. Although focused on a skinhead gang in Melbourne, Australia, the 1992 Russell Crowe film “Romper Stomper” paints a particularly vivid and well-researched picture of the day-to-day life of skinheads immersed in this culture. (A later film that explored the racist skinhead culture, this one set in California, was 1998’s “American History X,” starring Edward Norton.)

The importance of music in growing the worldwide skinhead movement cannot be overstated. William Pierce, leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance until his death in 2002, understood well the potential impact of hate-rock. “Music speaks to us at a deeper level than books or political rhetoric: music speaks directly to the soul,” said Pierce, author of the seminal hate-lit novel, *The Turner Diaries*.

Putting this insight into practice, Pierce purchased the ailing hate-rock label and distributor Resistance Records in 1999 and built the company into a major force in the world skin-

head movement. Resistance Records had been originally founded in 1993 by George Burdi, a young Canadian skinhead who also started the band RAHOWA (an acronym for Racial Holy War), which was one of the most popular and influential hate-rock bands of the period. Bernie Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress has described Burdi as one of the most effective recruiters for the movement in history. (Burdi has since renounced hate and embraced Eastern mysticism.)

The first label to seriously challenge the dominance of Resistance Records was Minnesota-based Panzerfaust, named after a Nazi-era German anti-tank weapon. Before imploding amid a scandal involving the non-Aryan heritage of its founder, Anthony Pierpont, Panzerfaust was best known for a failed 2005 plan to distribute 100,000 hate-rock sampler CDs in schoolyards across the nation.

The impact of U.S. hate rock is not limited to the United States. Since the production, performance, and distribution of such music is illegal in many countries in Western Europe, the U.S., with its First Amendment guarantees of free speech, has become a main provider of music to skinheads internationally (just as U.S. computer servers host most European hate sites in order to keep their owners clear of European anti-hate legislation). This relationship was built in part by the outreach programs of Resistance Records under George Burdi, who used to offer Eastern European CDs at 90% discounts, as well as free license to reproduce the music.

New media platforms — including social networking sites like MySpace and twitter and video file-sharing sites like YouTube — are being used by racist skinhead groups to recruit and expose others to their views.

### **The International Scene**

The connections between racist skinheads in the U.S. and Europe are not limited to hate-rock catalogs. With the rise of the Internet, groups scattered across the globe have been able to communicate and link up as never before, transforming the skinhead movement

from an exclusively neighborhood-based phenomenon into a global culture with common points of reference and even annual events. The ease with which interested parties can access hate literature and music online has also given rise to the phenomenon of the “internet Nazi” — young fellow travelers who are not part of organized skinhead gangs but who profess allegiance to the movement’s code and support purveyors of skinhead paraphernalia with online orders.

The country with the worst skinhead problem today is Russia, where it is estimated there are tens of thousands of active neo-Nazi skinheads, including thousands in the capital alone. In recent years, immigrants, students and even senior embassy staff from Asian and African nations have been the victims of assaults and murders on the streets of Moscow.

As in Western European countries, Russian skinhead violence often dovetails with soccer hooliganism. A 2002 report in *The Nation* described the trend:

“In the past few years a curious synthesis of the soccer hooligan and skinhead movements has been observed steadily gaining strength in the city. It’s no longer uncommon in Moscow to see crowds of 300-400 soccer fans — dressed in the black bomber jackets and black boots popularized by German skinheads — loitering on the streets in the city’s outer regions, and not always on the same nights as soccer matches.”

Some of these skinheads, the article notes, have been seen wearing the armbands of the neo-Nazi Russian National Unity party, suggesting links between street hate and organized political parties. Such links are suspected to be common in many Western European countries, where radical parties participate in electoral politics in recent years with sobering success.

Across Europe, radical parties are on the rise, exploiting fears over immigration. In several of these countries, associations have been traced between skinhead gangs and parties with representatives in regional and national bodies. ▲

## RACIST SKINHEAD GLOSSARY

**14/88:** Common white supremacist code. 14 stands for the “14 words” slogan coined by David Lane, who is serving a 190-year sentence for his part in the assassination of a Jewish talk show host: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” 88 means “Heil Hitler,” as H is the eighth letter of the alphabet.

**28:** Shorthand for Blood and Honour, a skinhead group.

**38:** Confederate Hammerskins, the southern faction of Hammerskin Nation (see below).

**Boot party:** Beating a victim to the ground then stomping and kicking him or her with steel-toed boots.

**Braces:** Suspenders.

**Crew:** Skinhead gang or faction.

**Colors:** Marks identifying affiliation; can be tattoos, patches on jackets, etc.

**Curbing, curb job:** Breaking a victim’s jaw or neck by forcing his or her face against a street curb and kicking the back of the victim’s head; popularized in the 1998 cult movie “American History X.”

**Dr. Martens (a.k.a. Doc Martens):** Brand of durable boots popular with skinheads as well as young people in all walks of life, though skins lace the boots differently (see “straight-laced”) and wear either red or white laces (see below).

**Homey sock:** Pool ball in a sock wrapped in tape so it doesn’t split open when used as a weapon.

**Featherwood:** Female skinhead.

**Five words:** “I have nothing to say.” Skinheads are exhorted to give this standard response to any and all media and law enforcement inquiries.

**Fred Perry:** Brand of polo shirt favored by skinheads.

**Fresh cut:** A newly indoctrinated skinhead whose head has recently been shaved for the first time.

**Hammerskins:** A nationwide skinhead syndicate, also known as Hammerskin Nation, with regional factions and chapters that once dominated skin subculture nationwide.

**HSN:** Hammerskin Nation.

**HFFH:** “Hammerskin Forever Forever Hammerskin.”

**Hang-around:** A young person who associates with skinheads but is not yet a probate (see below), akin to a gangbanger “wannabe.”

**Probate:** A “member in waiting” who is on probation for a set amount of time before he or she becomes a full-fledged member of a skinhead crew.

**RAHOWA:** Short for “Racial Holy War,” a slogan that originally came out of the neo-Nazi Church of the Creator; also the name of a defunct band.

**Red laces:** Bootlace color indicating the wearer has shed blood for the skinhead movement. Racist skinheads will often randomly attack non-whites to “earn” their red laces.

**Spider web tattoo:** Racist skinhead “badge of honor,” often worn on the elbow, indicating wearer has committed murder for the skinhead movement.

**SHARP:** Short for Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice, commonly known as SHARP skins, who often battle racist skins.

**Skinbyrd:** Female skinhead.

**Straight-laced:** A complex boot-lacing system favored by racist skins who lace their boots in horizontal, straight lines rather than X or cross patterns.

**White laces:** Bootlace color identifying a skinhead as being “white power,” as opposed to a non-racist (“traditional”) or anti-racist skin.

**ZOG:** Shorthand for “Zionist Occupation [or Occupied] Government,” reflecting the neo-Nazi conspiracy theory that the American government is secretly controlled by a powerful Jewish cabal.

# ‘ERASING HATE’

Bryon and Julie Widner decided to quit the world of hate. But former comrades, and Bryon’s tattoos, made it an uphill struggle



**Bryon and Julie Widner** were hard-core racists. Bryon, nicknamed “Babs,” was so committed to the cause that he tattooed his body with racist emblems, including his face, which depicted a bloody straight razor, his weapon of choice. Now 34, Bryon co-founded the Vinlanders Social Club, once one of the most notorious and violent racist skinhead outfits in the country. Julie, now 40, became a leader in the neo-Nazi National Alliance during approximately the same period. In 2005, Bryon and Julie met at a hate music event and it changed their lives. They married later that year and had a son (they also are raising Julie’s other four children together). After spend-

ing 16 years as a vicious brawler and razor-carrying skinhead enforcer, Bryon realized he didn’t want to raise his family in the hostile culture he once embraced. But he knew that his marked face would forever frustrate his efforts to rejoin the respectable world. In a courageous move, the Widners reached out to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), their longtime enemies, for help. Against daunting odds, both Widners made a permanent break with their pasts. Bryon’s path entailed excruciating physical pain, as he underwent some two dozen laser treatments to remove the tattoos from his face and neck that made it impossible for him to find work. The treatments, which were documented in the MSNBC film “Erasing Hate,” were made possible by a generous donor to the SPLC, which had long tracked the Widners. Bryon and Julie Widner spoke to the *Intelligence Report* in September about the white supremacist movement and why they left it.

## What first drew you to the movement?

**BRYON WIDNER:** I first became a skinhead at 14. We lived in Albuquerque, N.M., in the predominantly Mexican North Valley. When I was young, I didn’t like white people. I learned about skinheads from a relative who was one in the late 1980s. He didn’t indoctrinate me; he just gave me a taste of the life-

style. To impress him, I shaved my head and drew swastikas and upside-down crosses on my jacket. I got beat up a lot for this. Any normal person would have grown their hair out and quit. I decided to stick with it, probably because in that area white kids got jumped a lot.

But I didn’t meet any serious white power skinheads for some time; there

weren’t many in Albuquerque. I met my first white power skinhead when I was about 17, when a whole crop just came out of nowhere. This was long before the Internet. There was no way of getting information easily. If you wanted to hear racist music, you had to mix a tape. We had to do it old school.

**JULIE WIDNER:** My parents



divorced when I was about 9 and my mom ended up a single parent. She worked all the time. When I was 13, I had a mohawk, a swastika shaved on one side of my head, and an anarchy sign on the other. Even though I was living in a very nice part of Arizona, I would tell people Hitler wasn't that bad of a person. I didn't think of myself as a racist. I was just rebelling against society. But I know now that I was raised in a family with racist beliefs. My father raised us in that environment, in the Detroit area. You kept to yourself, didn't intermingle, didn't date someone not of your race.

I got pregnant with my first son at 17 and dropped out of high school. I had two kids by 19 and a failed relationship, but it wasn't until my late 20s that I actually found the movement. I met some skins from Tempe, Ariz., and they thought since I was new I should take baby steps. And baby steps meant joining the National Alliance [NA].

### **What about the racist scene appealed to you?**

BRYON: It was a family thing. I was a street kid, a chronic runaway. It got to the point that my dad told me to call every couple of weeks to let him know I was alive. So I didn't have any family but my new family, a small skin group we called the Soldiers of the New Reich. I found out later that my family really did care about me.

JULIE: For me, it was the excitement, because I had been a single mom for so long. All I did was work and take care of kids. And one of the skins I met from NA meetings, I ended up marrying him. I joined the NA in 2002 or 2003. After my husband died in a car crash in 2003, I became even more active after moving to Michigan. I was alone with the kids and they took me in as family. And I was really active on [the racist Web forum] Stormfront.org. I even ended up moving some prominent racists to my town and some stayed in my house. I traveled with a bunch to EURO [European American Unity and Rights conference, a gathering of white supremacists held near New Orleans by former Klansman David Duke's orga-

nization] in 2005. The nametags had your name and your Stormfront screen name, so we got to know each other.

### **Tell me about your time in the movement.**

BRYON: After the Soldiers [of the New Reich] fell apart, we went our separate ways. I got into some legal trouble, bounced around and landed in Indiana. In 1999, I met the guys from the Northern Hammerskins [a racist skinhead group]. They were all huge body builders. They were completely covered in tattoos, frightening looking and a solid unit. Their leader, Jeremy Robinson, was really charismatic. He was the kind of guy you would follow to the gates of hell. But I never got my patch because of legal trouble — I would get in bar fights. I always had anger issues.

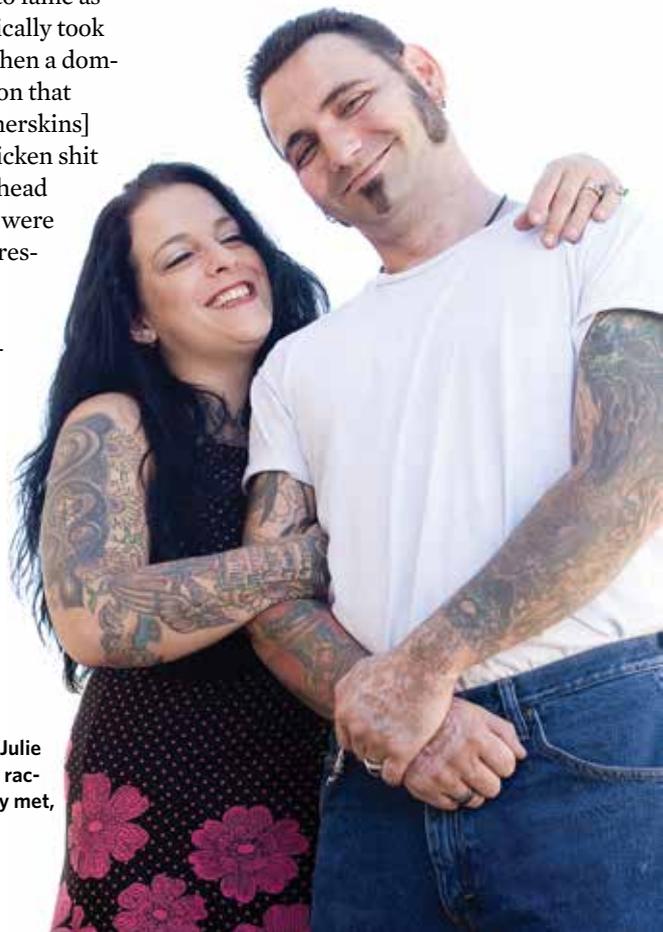
Once I cleared up my legal problems, the Outlaw Hammerskins [OHS] had formed. Jeremy [Robinson] remembered me from the parties that I went to, but I didn't see him for a couple years because I was in and out of jail. I brought [future Vinlanders Social Club (VSC) co-founder] Brien James to meet Jeremy, and we got drunk. Our claim to fame as OHS was the fact that we basically took on the Hammerskin Nation [then a dominant racist skinhead federation that included the Northern Hammerskins] and showed they were too chicken shit to shoot us. All the other skinhead crews saw that the Hammers were a joke. Our tattoos and Web presence made us look like a very, very extreme group. For the most part, we just kept to ourselves, and it was very rare if anyone was shot or stabbed. But OHS fell apart after Jeremy left around 2002 or 2003. He was paranoid and scared and just gave up.

JULIE: I was a loyal NA activist for years. Things changed after I found out that [NA Chairman] Erich Gliebe

was dating a stripper. I have always been anti-smut. I didn't even know he had a girlfriend, because he would call me and say, "What are you wearing?" I would say, "What do you mean what am I wearing? I'm in my pajamas, let's talk business." I talked to Gliebe a lot on the phone and all of a sudden I find out that he's marrying a stripper? Even worse, in 2002, when Gliebe told me [NA founder and long-time leader] William Pierce died, he said Pierce had a huge pornography collection. So when I found out, it was an easy decision to make, I was gone. I joined [the racist skinhead outfit] American Front, but I never got my patch.

### **How did the Vinlanders Social Club come about?**

BRYON: I was basically the last man in OHS. The day after I turned in my patch, Brien James started talking to me about forming the Hoosier State Skins. A bunch from OHS jumped on board, Eric ["The Butcher"] Fairburn, Jon Carr. We were blackballed from the movement because of OHS's threats against the Hammers. We really didn't



**Skinheads, a love story: Bryon and Julie Widner were some of the toughest racist activists on the scene. Then they met, and everything began to change.**

care. We told everyone on the Net that we were a white power group and if they didn't like it, they could fuck off.

But Brien had delusions of grandeur that he was the next führer and would take over the white power movement. Even so, I jumped on board because it gave me a chance to beat up some Hammerskins. I was an enforcer, after all. If another crew was worth a damn, I would bring them on board and run off all their buddies. But the ego battles between Brien and Eric started to really hurt VSC. Everybody thought Eric was the VSC "president" because he was loudest on the Internet. And he loved it. But Brien didn't.

### **When did things start to go sour?**

BRYON: My doubts started even in OHS. My brothers abused women. I had always been very adamant about not kicking the crap out of girls. My image of a skinhead was basically a guy who worked hard and took care of his business. Your work and family comes first and after that you make time for the guys. But apparently that just wasn't the deal. I was preaching white women are the holiest things in the world, but they thought they looked better with black eyes. I didn't want to say anything because I was afraid they'd shoot me. The OHS guys were pretty scary, so I just keep my mouth shut. One of the crutches I used was alcohol.

What hypocrites! I mean, nobody cared about their kids, or their family. They had bastard children all across the country. They didn't pay child support. All they cared about was drinking and committing felonies.

JULIE: It started for me at Nordic Fest [a major white power concert in Kentucky in May 2005], where I first met Bryon. Nordic Fest reconfirmed concerns I already had. None of the women I'd met had their children. It seems like all the skinhead chicks had their kids taken away or their parents were raising them. It's about drinking and partying — not about furthering any agenda.

And then at Nordic Fest, there was a 17-year-old girl and she was in a tent having guys go back and forth. I put an

**"I was preaching white women are the holiest things in the world, but they thought they looked better with black eyes. I didn't want to say anything because I was afraid they'd shoot me."**

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end to that. But there was another tent with another girl that the guys were taking turns with, too. It was supposed to be a family event! By the time Bryon and I started talking after Nordic Fest, we had so much to talk about and we were on the same page. And six or seven months after that, we got married and Bryon came to live with me in Michigan.

And then it got worse because Bryon's buddies were mad that he was closer to his family than them. Here we are trying to make a life — we're married and having a child — and everybody is turning against us. Then Eric [Fairburn] came to see what we were up to. They were partying every day. One night we were at a lake and the guys were trying to get Bryon to come with them. They were all hell-bent on kicking some guy's ass, some Klan member. I leave, go home and I get a phone call asking what medications is Bryon on—he's at the hospital and the doctor wants to know.

Here we are trying to be a family and they come out and they start drinking and Bryon is at the hospital. They're trying to tell me that it's none of my business as his wife. After that, Bryon decided no more drinking, because we fought, too, when he drank. And that's also when the phone calls started, around the middle of the summer of 2006. They were calling at 3:30 a.m. and hanging up or saying, "You're going to die."

### **How did you actually leave the movement?**

BRYON: There wasn't any kind of definitive moment when I just said, "I'm done." It was the culmination of a lot of things as I slowly opened my eyes. Once the death threats started happening ... It was the most ridiculous, unbrotherly thing in the world. That's when I hung up my boots. Julie was done long before

that. I contacted [black anti-racist activist] Daryl Jenkins and we became friends. Then I reached out to former skinhead T.J. Leyden, whom I'd been following on the Web. He told me to call the SPLC. That was February 2006.

### **What was it like sitting down with your mortal enemies?**

BRYON: It was incredibly strange. I mean, [SPLC co-founder] Morris Dees? He was the guy that hid under your bed and shut down your crews, Public Enemy Number One. I was nervous.

### **How did your tattoos affect your life at this point?**

BRYON: I couldn't get any decent jobs. Half of the people wouldn't give me an application because of the way I looked. It sucked and I needed to feed my family. I even talked to Julie about getting some dermal acid on eBay. I was going to test it out on my hands first and see how it worked and I was going to douse my face in it. I figured if I did that enough times the tattoos would come off.

### **Tell us about why the film "Erasing Hate" was so important to you?**

BRYON: I agreed to do the first couple of laser treatments without anesthesia. It was one of the most excruciating things that I've done in my life. But I felt like I deserved it. It was penance.

It took 24 separate treatments to get the tattoos off. But if I can prevent one other kid from making the same mistakes I did, if I can prevent one other family from having to go through what I put my family through, maybe I can redeem myself. And it's really amazing. People have said that I have touched their life in positive ways. I never once thought I would ever touch anyone's life — except maybe by punching them. ▲

# RACIST SKINHEADS

CIRCA

1969

The original skinhead subculture explodes among urban, working-class youths in Britain, combining style elements drawn from white "Mods" and West Indian "Rudeboys." Though tinged with soccer hooliganism, traditional skinhead culture is not racist (to this day, there are black "trad" skins).

EARLY

1980s

British skinhead scene factionalizes. White power skinheads develop a separate subculture based on the white nationalist music of "Rock Against Communism" bands like Skrewdriver, Skullhead, and No Remorse who opposed the "Rock Against Racism" concerts of anti-racist skins.



CIRCA

1982

Racist skinheads begin to appear in U.S. in significant numbers.

CIRCA

1986

Romantic Violence, also known as CASH (Chicago Area Skinheads), takes form as one of the first true racist skinhead gangs in the United States, followed in short order by the Confederate Hammerskins in Dallas.

Former California Klan leader Tom Metzger forms the Aryan Youth Movement, a skinhead division of his



white supremacist group White Aryan Resistance (WAR).

1988

Skinhead violence erupts across the United States, with scores of violent attacks and murders recorded over the next four years.

Tom Metzger and son John organize the first hate rock festival, Aryan Fest, which is held in Oklahoma.

A flying chair breaks the nose of television talk show host Geraldo Rivera during a brawl between skinhead gang leaders and African-American activists on the set of "The Geraldo Rivera Show."



Members of the Confederate Hammerskins patrol Robert E. Lee Park in Dallas, beating any non-white they come across. The gang is ultimately linked to 40 crimes, including the vandalism of a Dallas synagogue. Police foil a plot by armed Hammerskins to destroy Jewish businesses on Nov. 9, the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Nazi pogrom also known as the "Night of Broken Glass."

Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw is beaten to death by members of East Side White Pride, a Portland, Ore., gang with close ties to WAR.

1991

In June, more than 60 Aryan National Front (ANF) skinheads and Klansmen march through downtown Birmingham in a dramatic show of force.



1992

In April, members of the skinhead gang ANF murder a homeless black man in Birmingham, Ala., after attending a Hitler birthday party.

1994

Regional Hammerskin factions unite under the common banner of Hammerskin Nation (HSN).

Skinhead gang leader Randall Lee Krager forms Volksfront in Oregon.

1995

Southern California skinhead Randall Rojas beats a homeless black man to death behind a fast-food restaurant.

1997

Bruce Vander Jagt becomes the first American police officer killed in the line of duty by a racist skinhead when he's gunned down in Denver by 25-year-old racist Mattheus Jaehning after a high-speed



Vander Jagt

# A TIMELINE OF THE MOVEMENT



chase. The next week, a dead pig bearing Vander Jagt's name is dumped outside a Denver police substation, and Denver skinheads Nathan Thill



and Jeremiah Barnum murder a West African immigrant they encounter at a bus stop. Thill later tells a reporter that he killed Oumar Dia because he was "wearing the enemy's uniform" — his black skin.

## 1998

Independent Nazi Skins gang leader John "Polar Bear" Butler ambushes and kills two Anti-Racist Action members in the desert outside Las Vegas on the Fourth of July.

## 1999

Florida skinheads attack interracial couples, killing a woman and a child in two separate incidents.



Five ousted members of the Northern Region of Hammerskin Nation form a renegade outfit they call Outlaw Hammerskins.

Hammerskin Nation reorganizes and throws its first Hammerfest, the group's signature hate rock festival, in rural Bremen, Ga. More than 600 skinheads from across the country attend.

## 2000

While Hammerskin Nation remains the nation's largest skinhead organization, the number of HSN chapters drops from 27 to 19.

## 2001

Midland Hammerskin Shane McCormick stabs a black man in a Missouri restaurant.



Hammerfest attendance drops to 220 as HSN's elitist posturing and relentless attempts to dictate the rules of skinhead culture in the U.S. breed widespread resentment.

## 2002

Skinhead Kevin A. Johnson beats a man to death outside the Courtesy Diner in St. Louis while spewing anti-Semitic epithets, although his victim is not Jewish.

The Outlaw Hammerskins implode due to infighting.

HSN's power continues to wane.

Hammerfest attendance dwindles to 150.

## 2003

The number of skinhead chapters nationwide more than doubles, due mostly to the rapidly increasing strength of independent, regional skinhead crews, most notably the Hoosier State Skins (Indiana and Illinois), the Ohio State Skinheads, and the Pennsylvania-based Keystone State Skinheads.

## 2004

Non-Hammerskin crews continue to evolve and unify.

Members of the Hoosier State Skins and Ohio State Skinheads — including several former Outlaw Hammerskins — form the Vinlanders Social Club, also known as the Vinlanders, a skinhead "warrior clan" devoted to drinking, fighting, and a racist form of Odinism, a pagan religion once practiced by Norse Vikings.



## 2005

The Vinlanders host the first official Blood and Honour Council, a unity meeting of regional skinhead crews also known as the Council of 28 (B is the second letter of the alphabet, H is the eighth; hence, 28 stands for Blood and Honour). The council is attended by at



least 60 members of more than a dozen white supremacist groups.

## 2006

Skinhead resurgence parallels rise in skinhead-related criminal activity.



Kurtis William Monschke, head of the Washington state chapter of Volksfront, helps three other racist skinheads use baseball bats and rocks to beat to death a homeless white man in Tacoma.

State or regionally based independent skinhead crews, such as the Keystone State Skinheads in Pennsylvania, begin to flourish.

Sixty-seven alleged members of the skinhead gang Public Enemy Number 1 are arrested on charges including illegal weapons and drugs, forgery and identity theft. The gang reportedly had a hit list that targeted local police officers and a prosecutor.

## 2007

American Front founder David Lynch re-emerges on the West Coast as a leader in the nationwide skinhead scene, uniting American Front crews in northern and southern California, Utah and Florida. Rising anti-immigrant sentiment helps fuel movement.

The Hammerskins and the Vinlanders Social Club declare an uneasy truce.



Utah jail inmate and longtime skinhead Curtis Allgier allegedly shoots and kills corrections officer Stephen Anderson while being transported from jail to a local hospital. Anderson's death marks the second time in a decade a law enforcement officer is killed, allegedly, by a racist skinhead.

## 2008

Steven Edwards, son of a Kentucky Klan leader, and several associates form a new racist skinhead group called the Supreme White Alliance.

Daniel Cowart, a probationary member of the Supreme White Alliance, and Paul Schlesselman are arrested in Tennessee for plotting to assassinate President Obama and murder more than 100 black people. In 2010, Cowart is sentenced to 14 years in prison and Schlesselman to 10.

## 2009

Hate group membership rises in the wake of the election of President Obama. Authorities see an increased crossover between skinhead crews and motorcycle gangs, spurring organized criminal activity.

## 2010

Fifty people are arrested in the largest take-down of white supremacist gangs in Orange County, Calif., history after a two-year federal probe dubbed "Operation Stormfront." Members of the Aryan Brotherhood, La Miranda Punks, West Coast Costa Mesa Skins, Nazi Low Riders, O.C. Skins and Public Enemy Number 1 are charged with a variety of crimes, including extortion, conspiracy, solicitation of aggravated assault and murder, criminal fraud, and illegal firearms and narcotics sales.

More than a dozen members or associates of the Arizona faction of the Vinlanders are arrested on charges that include aggravated assault, murder, drug possession and misconduct involving firearms.

## 2011

American Front founder David Lynch is found shot to death in his California home. As of yet, no one has been charged with his murder.



Vinlanders co-founder Eric Fairburn pleads guilty to murder in the 2004 shooting death of a 57-year-old Missouri man and is sentenced to life in prison. A few months later, the Vinlanders hold their

first white power concert, "Plunder and Pillage," in Ohio. The truce between the Vinlanders and the Hammerskins continues to hold.

## 2012

Six members or associates of the Outlaws motorcycle club and the neo-Nazi 1st SS Kavallerie Brigade Motorcycle Division are arrested on drug-related charges and charges relating to threats to throw a destructive device. They allegedly plotted to blow up buildings and houses and kill rivals.

Twelve members of American Front's central Florida crew are arrested on charges of conspiracy, committing a hate crime and participating in paramilitary training. The group was allegedly preparing for a "race war" and planning an attack (which did not happen) on a May Day rally in Melbourne, Fla.

# SKIN SYMBOLS

Insignias and Tattoos of the Racist Skinhead Underground



American Front



Volksfront



Blood and Honour, Klan, Odinst iconography



Ohio State Skinheads/  
Vinlanders



Keystone State  
Skinheads



Vinlanders probate patch



Old school  
RAC logo



Skinhead merchandise  
distributor



Hate rock label patch



United Kingdom  
skinhead patch



Norse runes  
tattoo



Celtic Cross tattoo



American Thule  
Society



Totenkopf tattoo  
("My Honor is Loyalty")



Skinbyrd  
patch



White power fist w/ laurels



Independent skin tattoo



Hate rock band patch w/Thor's Hammer



Triskelion ("three sevens") tattoo



SS lightning bolts tattoo



Fenris Wolf Pagan/Odinist symbol tattoo



Thor's Hammer tattoo



Skrewdriver life rune patch



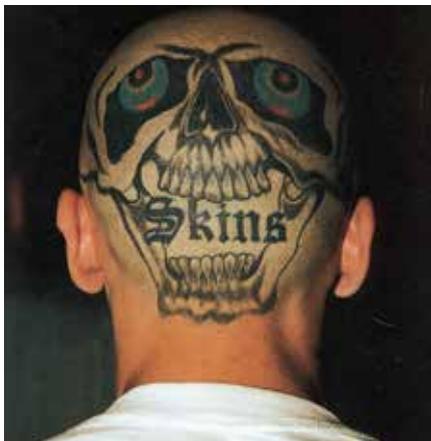
Council 28/Blood and Honour Council



88 boots tattoo



Skynbird spinning swastika tattoo w/ 14/88



Skin skull tattoo



Nazi skin iconography tattoo



Crucified skin tattoo ("One people, One Empire, One Leader")



Totenkopf (death's head) patch w/ 14/88



Hammerskin Nation



Northwest Hammerskins



Confederate Hammerskins



Western Hammerskins



Eastern Hammerskins



Hammerskin prospect patch



Midland Hammerskins



"Hammerskin Forever, Forever Hammerskin"



Northern Hammerskins

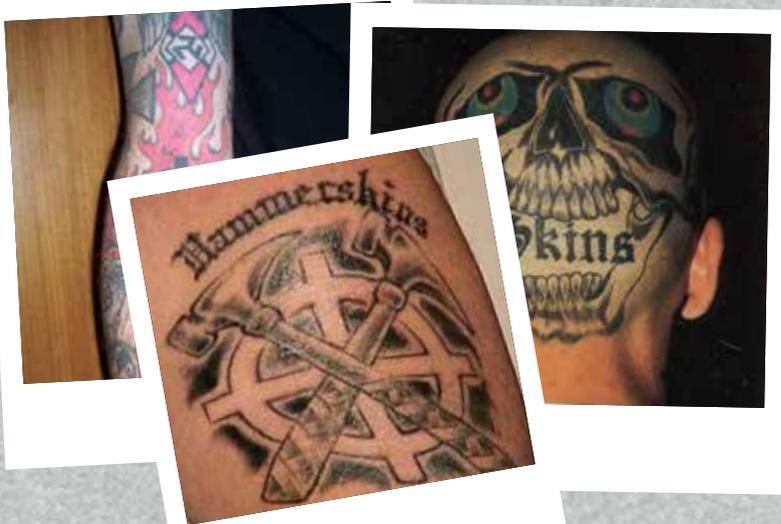


Hammerskin Celtic Cross tattoo

If you are an officer who specializes in tracking racist skinheads, there is a national organization dedicated to that purpose. The Skinhead Intelligence Network — or SIN — is a unique network of officers that is meant to aid law enforcement in monitoring, tracking and prosecuting racist skinheads involved in criminal activity. Active-duty officers interested in more information about joining SIN can email their inquiries to **[skinheadintelligencenetwork@gmail.com](mailto:skinheadintelligencenetwork@gmail.com)**.

# The SPLC *Intelligence Report* Offers Online Investigative Resources

The *Intelligence Report* is offering **free online resources** to help law enforcement track extremist activity in their communities and conduct criminal investigations. Check out our website and see all that we have to offer. [www.intelligencereport.org](http://www.intelligencereport.org)



Ever seen tattoos like these while on duty?  
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## Intelligence Files

[intelligencereport.org/files](http://intelligencereport.org/files)

Read our in-depth profiles about hate movement leaders and their groups. Learn what motivates them, how they act and how your community may be affected.

## Hatewatch.org

[intelligencereport.org/blog](http://intelligencereport.org/blog)

Don't wait for the printed edition to get updates about hate groups and extremists. Read our online Hatewatch blog for current events in the world of hate. And subscribe to our free e-newsletter *Hatewatch Weekly*.

## Interactive Hate Map

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Find detailed information about hate groups and their activities in your area.

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