

# Nazis Next Door: Michigan is home to largest Neo-Nazi group in U.S.

(WXYZ) - The National Socialist Movement is the largest Neo-Nazi group in the United States. They display swastikas in their rallies and marches. The NSM lists its headquarters as a P.O. Box inside a post office on Detroit's East Side.

Its leader, 40-year-old Jeff Schoep, lives in Eastpointe. Schoep, who goes by the title "Commander," leads about 55 chapters of the NSM.

"It's not hate or racism to speak on pro white terms," said Schoep.

"Do you approve of race mixing," asked 7 Action News Investigator Heather Catallo.

"Absolutely not," said Schoep.

"Why not," asked Catallo.

"Race mixing in my mind is the destruction of all cultures," said Schoep.

"It is wrong on every level. First of all, America is based on immigrants. This is a country of immigrants," said Anti-Defamation League Regional Director Heidi Budaj. "They (Neo-Nazi groups) would like other races to go away... Many of them believe that American citizenship should only be afforded to white people -- white people excluding homosexuals and non-Christians."

Budaj says Nazi-like hate speech can be dangerous.

"There are actually very few steps between embracing that ideology, acting on that ideology, turning to violence with that ideology... It can actually in the end lead to genocide," said Budaj.

Back in 2005 – the National Socialist Movement clashed with demonstrators in Toledo Ohio, inciting riots.

Experts say Neo-Nazi groups like NSM often believe in many of the ideas that Adolph Hitler spread through Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, including the claim that Jews are a sub-human race and the Aryan race must stay separate.

"Are you an anti-Semite," asked Catallo.

"Define anti-Semite," said Schoep.

"Do you dislike Jewish people," asked Catallo.

"I believe in the national self-determination of all peoples. That all people have the right to exist and the right to their own homelands and things of that nature," said Schoep.

The NSM may be the biggest Neo-Nazi group in Michigan, but it's not the only one. The American Nazi Party is headquartered in the all-American city of Westland.

Calling themselves a "political education association," the ANP is led by Rocky Suhayda. But both Anti-Defamation League and National Socialist Movement leadership say Suhayda's group is dwindling and largely inactive – one of the few things those groups likely agree on.

Despite our visits, phone calls and emails, Suhayda would not discuss the American Nazi Party. While many disagree with his views, Suhayda seems to live a quiet life in Westland. Neither the police department nor the mayor knew he was there.

“It’s despicable that we have these sorts of views going on, but they’re certainly protected under the First Amendment,” said Eastern Michigan University Professor Jack Kay, who once infiltrated the Aryan Nations. “I’m most fearful of it getting to this leaderless resistance lone-wolf mentality where the teach individuals to go out and do something.”

Researchers at the Southern Poverty Law Center say hate groups across the country are on the rise. In 2000, they counted 600 groups. In 2012, that number had grown to 1007.

Michigan has 25 known hate groups, and experts say our state has long history with the extreme right. During the 1920’s Detroit had more than 60,000 members of the Ku Klux Klan.

“If you’re a white separatist, why are you living in Detroit,” Catallo asked Schoep.

“Detroit is just the city I chose to live in.... A person shouldn’t have to run and live out in the middle of the woods in nowhere to be amongst their own,” said Schoep.

But the real reason these modern day Nazi groups are based in Michigan may have more to do with convenience, as opposed to a problem with local race relations.

Experts say NSM is headquartered here because Jeff Schoep moved from Minnesota to marry a Michigan woman several years ago. He refuses to comment on that.

We’re told Rocky Suhayda just happens to be from this area, so the ANP is based out of his home.

“While we don’t want to give undue attention to the groups that espouse these ideologies, we do want to make citizens aware that this exists in our community,” said Budaj.

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