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Wednesday, April 7, 1999

The Gamecock

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Student Nazis

•A Web-based white supremacist group headed by a Wofford College junior is causing a stir among media and civil rights groups.

Story by Erin Reed

A Wofford College student has attracted nationwide attention with his white supremacist organization, Knights of Freedom.

Davis Wolfgang Hawke, 20, is being watched by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League because of the potential influence he might have on vulnerable followers.

"I think I worry them because I'm an intelligent person," said Hawke, a junior majoring in history and German. "I'm in college, and I have leadership skills. I think that causes them some real concern — the fact that there's a fresh face in the movement."

"We've been monitoring his Web site for several years," said Jay Gaiman, southeast director for the Anti-Defamation League, which monitors more than 500 hate Internet sites.

"I don't think you can take individuals like him lightly. There are vulnerable individuals out there who listen to his type of garbage; they're motivated by the conspiracy theory, ethnic cleansing and the idea that all immigrants need to go back to where they came from."

Hawke also has received considerable attention from the media.

The *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* broke the story of the Knights of Freedom in 1998, after Hawke had been in Spartanburg for two years studying at Wofford.

The *Boston Globe* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ran articles about him in March, and he was quoted in the March 8 edition of *Newsweek* in an article about Internet hate groups.

The growing white supremacist movement is perceived as a more serious situation as more groups use

the Internet to post information and try to enlist new members.

"We feel it's our mission to expose their words so they can't hide," Gaiman said.

He said civil rights groups used to try to expose Ku Klux Klan members and what they were saying, but it was difficult because they were hiding behind masks.

"Now it's more difficult because they can hide behind their computer screens," he said.

"By using the web, Hawke created a real organization with a hundred or so real members," said Mark Potok, of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Birmingham, Ala. "He became more than merely an Internet presence."

Hawke started the Knights of Freedom in 1996 "to defend the rights of white people." He considers the Jewish race his enemy.

"The ultimate goal is the elimination of the Jewish race as an entity, and that can be accomplished by not letting them breed," he said.

As for other nonwhite races, "we favor separatism," he said. "We don't want to be near the other races; we don't want to live with them. Africans belong in Africa, Asians belong in Asia, and we belong here and in Europe."

Hawke said violence is a means to achieving this end, an idea that causes the ADL some concern.



Wofford College Junior Davis Wolfgang Hawke, center, maintains a Web site for his white supremacist group, Knights of Freedom. He is pictured above with his commanding officers at the K.O.F. Regional Headquarters in Spartanburg. Civil Rights groups worry that, because the group's on the Web, Hawke will attract vulnerable followers that will subscribe to his Nazi beliefs.

"He's crossed the line a little bit in terms of his threats," Gaiman said. "From some of the things I've read on his Web page recently, there is an indication that he's starting to do much more in the way of intimidation."

Hawke's aspirations include getting involved in state and national government, eventually being elected president of the United States.

"By the year 2000, we'll still be in the building stages," Hawke said. "By 2010, I would expect that we'll [Knights of Freedom] be a major force in national politics, and I may be the leader of the country by then."

Gaiman said the world shouldn't worry about a neo-Nazi being elected president anytime soon.

"It's pretty ridiculous to think that someone like him who's gone on record saying all these views is going to be elected to office," he said.

"I think I give our country a lot more credit than Hawke does."

However, Gaiman doesn't discredit the fact that individuals like Hawke have succeeded in similar aspirations.

"What is scary is that there are people out there like him who have espoused these views and who have done fairly well in trying to get elected to office," he said.

"If he thinks he's got a legitimate platform to run, he should run. That's why we're a democracy. But you can

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Jay Gaiman
 Southeast director
 Anti-Defamation League



Fox Television videotapes a recent Knights of Freedom meeting. Hawke, commander-in-chief, considers any media attention a good thing, no matter how negative the coverage.

bet we're going to be out there speaking against him."

Hawke said he has traveled to other colleges in the southeast speaking about the Knights of Freedom and his ideas. He said he speaks to invitation-only groups and each time has gotten about 10 or 15 people interested in joining.

"I just try to present them with an alternative viewpoint," he said. "They're given one viewpoint in college, and that's the liberal, Jewish media viewpoint. All I try to do is give them a different interpretation of history and how that different interpretation applies to present-day modern America."

Hawke said no Wofford students have joined the Knights of Freedom, a fact that doesn't surprise Wofford College's dean, Dan Mauldsby.

"I'm sure enough of the values of the college, and I have enough confidence in the intelligence and the judgement of our students that I really don't worry about any of our students being influenced by him," he said.

"Students at Wofford have been very mature and responsible in showing their disapproval of the ideas he's expressing, and I think that's been very positive."

Although Hawke's chances of bringing his plans to fruition are slim, what worries civil rights groups is his dedication to white supremacy and his ability to quickly and efficiently disseminate information to an impressionistic public through the Internet.

"He's a little more sophisticated than a lot of the Web pages I've looked at, and he's able to articulate his message in a more effective way," Gaiman said. "Because of that, he has the potential of developing more of a following."

Potok is only mildly concerned. "I'm not terribly worried about Hawke," he said. "I think that, conceivably, he could have become a leader of some importance in the white supremacist movement, but I think he acts like a villain out a Batman comic book, a kid who thinks he's going to rule the world simply because he has high S.A.T. scores."

"So I think he's not taken very seriously out there in the organized white supremacist movement. In fact, he's seen as something of an embarrassment."

However, Potok acknowledges that Hawke's case still should be monitored. "There's always a possibility of some threat," he said. "He's exhorting his followers to build a Nazi revolution. I'm certainly not saying he's going to go out and start putting Jews in gas chambers, but you never know what one of his followers might do."

Potok said that, although many hate groups are temporary and largely ineffective, they should be taken seriously.

"Many people have been killed in this country as a result of this movement," he said. "I would remind the people who think we should ignore these kids of groups that 168 people were murdered in Oklahoma City in 1995."

"I'm not saying Davis Wolfgang Hawke is going to become a mass murderer, but I am saying that, out of the larger movement, that is what we've seen."

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