

# Neo-Nazi flyers placed outside homes

## Indiana group advises reporting any incidents

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INDIANAPOLIS – Stephen Aldrich, a resident of the Woodland Trace neighborhood in Indianapolis, was taking his dog on a walk on June 19 when he started noticing little Ziploc bags scattered on the driveways of every few houses.

Upon a closer inspection, Aldrich saw an antisemitic flyer, blaming Jewish people for creating abortion.

After walking about a mile, Aldrich said he noticed around 40 of these neo-Nazi propaganda bags around suburban neighborhoods on the southeast side of Indianapolis.

Aldrich called the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department to notify them of the bags and an officer came by the neighborhood to assess the situation. By later that evening, the bags had been cleared.

The bags were not the first instance of white supremacist flyers spread across Indianapolis neighborhoods in recent weeks, according to local Jewish community organizations.

Suzanne Rothenberg, an associate regional director for the Anti-Defamation League's Midwest Office, said the propaganda trend has been seen and reported across the country. The organization's incident tracker showed that the number of antisemitic incidents, including flyers, has been increasing for the past 10 years.

Rothenberg pointed out that often the content of the flyers blames the Jewish community for what perpetrators see as bad aspects of society.

"Especially in June, we've seen a resurgence of flyers that tie the Jewish community to the LGBTQ community in a really negative way. And we're very strong allies of the LGBTQ community, we have a lot of LGBTQ Jews," Rothenberg said. "And so, I think it also speaks to the fact that white supremacy, antisemitism, that type of hate doesn't stay quarantined. We've also seen flyers that tie the Jewish community to the immi-



**Stephen Aldrich found resealable bags filled with rice and flyers that included neo-Nazi messages in his Indianapolis neighborhood.** GRACE SMITH/INDIANAPOLIS STAR

grant community as if it's a bad thing."

Rothenberg recounted an instance where she was stunned to find a flyer herself.

"You're wondering if somebody's watching you. You're wondering what happened next. Who put it there? How long ago? It's a very violating, threatening feeling. And it's so easy for people to just get out there and do, which I think is one of the reasons that we're seeing such a rise in this," Rothenberg said.

### Few people, lots of noise

Rothenberg said the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Community Relations Center have determined the main group spreading neo-Nazi flyers in Indianapolis but did not want to share the name to avoid giving them more publicity. She said groups often put the flyers up at night.

"The incident of leaving antisemitic flyers is very low risk for the perpetrator, and generally has a high impact," Rothenberg said. "Targeting a marginalized community with an action like this has the potential to affect the entire community. One person finds it at their house, but hundreds of people are wondering what it really means for them

next."

Rothenberg said it is important to understand that while the flyers should be taken seriously, they do not always reflect an immediate threat.

"(White supremacists) will put stickers that say, 'America first' or 'Take back America for the white race.' They'll go through and vandalize an entire downtown," Rothenberg said. "And again, it makes you feel like, 'Did 30 people just roll through my neighborhood last night?' When in reality, it might have just been one person."

Fabio Rojas, a sociology professor at Indiana University who has researched radical social movements, said the number of people who engage in far-right radicalism is small nationwide.

"I think it's important to not give them legitimacy," Rojas said.

As for the movement itself, Rojas said antisemitic and radical right-wing movements tend to focus on similar themes like traditional family values, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments and anti-abortion sentiments.

He said that the reason for targeting suburban neighborhoods specifically may simply have to do with proximity, or what he calls "crimes of convenience."

"When crime happens, usually, it's

local. It's people who live around that neighborhood," Rojas said. "Homicides and personal assaults are usually done by people you have some connection with. So, this is probably the same thing, which is, they're probably a couple of antisemites living somewhere in southern Indy and they just think that that's what they want to do, and it's easy and close."

Rothenberg acknowledged that white supremacist flyers and propaganda can negatively impact a swath of minority communities.

"As much as we appreciate the solidarity that we feel from others, we are still standing in solidarity with other marginalized communities when things like this happen to them, too," Rothenberg said.

Jacob Markey, executive director of the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Center, said that when people find a flyer, the most important thing to do is to speak up. "If you see something, say something," Markey said.

Markey said people can contact local law enforcement to report a flyer or report the incident online to the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis.

Rothenberg said another action people can take is to pick up flyers so that others do not have to find them.

"Please do not post it on social media because it is a publicity stunt, but if somebody wants to say something on social media, a message of solidarity is really helpful right now," Rothenberg said.

Sgt. Anthony Patterson, a spokesperson for the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, said that when flyers are found, police are not able to take action unless a law is broken.

He said protocol is to visit the site and determine if someone is exercising their freedom of speech or if there is a need for a report.

"I understand and IMPD understands that there are times where people say things or write things that people dislike or disagree with, but it doesn't fall under the, 'Hey, this person broke the law,' " Patterson said. "There's just not a whole lot that IMPD can do about it, but certainly, those are case-by-case situations."