

Former Neo-Nazi skinhead speaks at UNLV

By Brad Tittington
News Editor

Frank Meeink, former neo-Nazi skinhead, spoke at UNLV on Monday about his incredible journey from a life filled with committing acts of violence to advocating acts of understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Meeink gave a detailed account of his life as he grew up in South Philadelphia in a single parent home. As an early teenager, Meeink described himself as an "alternative, punk rock skater."

Meeink told the story of how he first got involved with the skinheads and how they became a part of his life.

"It looked interesting to me," Meeink said. "It was a belonging, big time. My cousin was involved in the skinheads."

He told his accounts of how his group became what was known as the "Christian movement of the KKK."

According to Meeink, they caused a riot and the KKK felt that they were starting to give them a bad name. They were forced to change their name and

they became known as "Strike Force."

Meeink gave an account of how his friends went down to the Delaware River one night and encountered a Cambodian family. They beat the family and threw them in the river and wouldn't let them get back onto land. In the end, they ended up causing the mother, who was pregnant, to have a miscarriage.

"You were looked at as heroes of war," Meeink said. "You get a tattoo on your elbow if you kill someone, but you have to have proof."

Meeink also gave an account of a white college kid who went to a reggae concert. His friends felt that there was something wrong with a white person attending a reggae concert. They beat the kid so bad that he is confined to a wheelchair.

"He was a good college kid," Meeink said. "He didn't have a beef with no one."

Meeink spoke about how easy it was to recruit young kids into the skinheads. He told stories of how he would stand out front of schoolyards to recruit and hand out flyers.

"White kids that were scared of

black and Latino gangs were easy to recruit," Meeink said. "(The) 13 to 15-year-olds are the main ones to get into it. Ninety percent of them come from single parent homes and they didn't get along with that parent. If they were getting good parenting, they wouldn't be in it."

He also talked about how the media was a form of free advertising for him and his friends.

"They constantly followed us around," he said. "They loved this stuff."

He also told about the cable access channel that the skinheads had that was basically a free advertisement for them. They ran the show the same time as the news was on and the ratings for the show were higher.

Meeink then recounted the story of his downfall. He told the story of how there were two groups of skinheads where he lived. There were the S.H.A.R.P. (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) and there was his group. According to Meeink, the two did not see eye to eye. Eventually there was one S.H.A.R.P. left and they had become civil towards him. One night they invited him over for a Christ-

mas Eve party, which was all a scheme.

According to Meeink, they kidnapped him for 12 hours and beat him with a shotgun, knocked his teeth in, put his head through a wall and put a tarp around him because they didn't want him to bleed on the new carpet in their house. The group videotaped the whole thing.

They let the kid go the next day and he went straight to the police. Undercover cops eventually arrested Meeink and he got three to five years in prison. Meeink was 17 at the time.

It was while in prison that his life began to change. He told the story of a black man named "Abel" who invited him down to his cell for bible study. It was that gesture that changed Meeink's life forever.

"Prison is a rotating door for gang members," he said. "I couldn't do it anymore. I didn't want to go to prison anymore, I didn't want to kill someone, I didn't want to be dead. I didn't want to hate someone because of the color of their skin. I never say the 'n' word anymore out of respect. I think the whole skinhead thing is dying."

After getting out of prison,

Meeink changed his lifestyle and started making a positive turnaround. He went to the FBI after the Oklahoma City Bombing to alert officials of the skinheads plans to bomb the FBI training center.

Meeink, who turned 23 on Wednesday, now runs a hockey league to get kids on hockey teams and keep them out of trouble. The program is sponsored by the Philadelphia Flyers of the National Hockey League.

"I truly learned what goes around, comes around. If you put out negative, you get negative in return. If you put out positive, you get positive in return. I went from negative to positive and now it's all good. I love working with kids."

Meeink lives in Philadelphia and has a daughter who lives in Illinois. He was one of the main leaders of the skinheads and was wanted by the FBI for years before he was finally caught.

He now teaches people that there is nothing wrong with being proud of their heritage, but there is such a thing as going too far.

"When you are proud of your white heritage associated with Hitler, that's when you know it's wrong."

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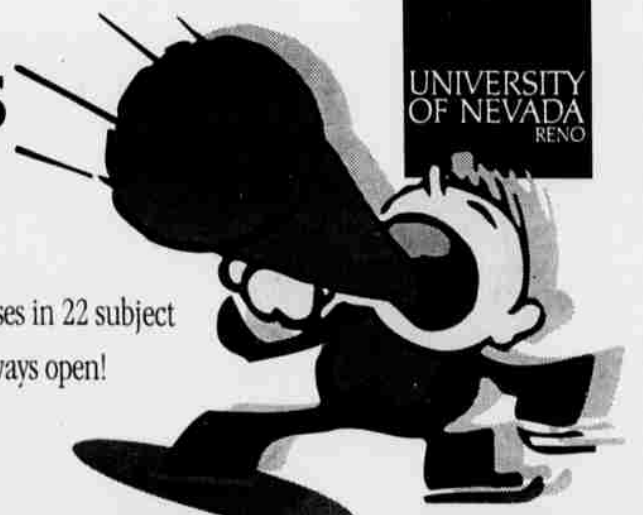
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