

Watch group: Hate entities slightly on uptick

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
 WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Race hate groups in America grew slightly last year and continue to remain active, despite high profile prosecutions for old crimes and the deaths or incarcerations of hate leaders, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate group activity.

The number of groups grew only a fraction of a percentage, from 751 in 2003, to 762 last year, a far cry from the largest increase. In 2001, it jumped 37 percent (457 to 602).

Still, the growth has been gradual, but steady, reflecting a 67 percent increase since 2001.

"The year 2004 was also marked by an upsurge in attempts to market White supremacy to the masses. Hate groups put up billboards, leafleted in huge numbers, adopted highways for cleanup, wrote letters to the editor and generally attempted to put a publicly palatable face on the movement," states "The Year in Hate," an annual report by the center. "The radical right, as a whole, remained remarkably steady last year, fueled by street-level activism welling up from below."

African-Americans are twice as likely as Hispanics and other racial groups to be attacked or harassed by hate groups, said Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project of the law center. Even four decades after the Civil Rights Movement when Black progress is still slow, hate group attacks still appear motivated by White fear of Black advancement.

"Very typically, where we see racial hate crimes are in neighborhoods that are at a certain point in demographic change," says Potok.

"Certainly, the classics are the cross burnings in the all-White neighborhood that the Black family moves into. But typically, that's not where you see most of your hate crimes. It's when a neighborhood is closer to a tipping point of become majority Black or majority Hispanic when it's been all-White."

Anti-Black bias has consistently been the most prevalent motivation behind racial hate crimes, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Also, according to FBI statistics the percentage of attacks on Blacks has in-

creased each year since 2001. That year, despite increased attacks on Middle Eastern Americans because of Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, attacks against Blacks still amounted to more than other races at 29.8 percent of all hate crimes (2,899 incidents).

In 2002, they increased to 33.3 percent of all hate crime attacks (2,486); and in 2003,

the most recent reporting period, anti-Black attacks continued to increase to 34 percent of all hate crimes (2,548 incidents).

The incidents increase despite the fall of hate group leaders.

The National Alliance lost its founder, William Pierce, to cancer in 2002.

The Aryan Nation's

founder, Richard Butler, died last September. Matt Hale, founder of the Creativity Movement, formerly known as the World Church of the Creator, was convicted of soliciting the murder of a federal judge last spring and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

Still, Blacks across the U.S. remain under attack,

often by loose-knit groups not even related to hate groups.

"You're dealing with people who think like, 'This is our city. Y'all [N-word] are not going to get it. You're not going to have it your way.' That's the reality of what we're dealing with," said Larry Rivera, owner of ANG Auto Sales of Fayetteville,

N.C.

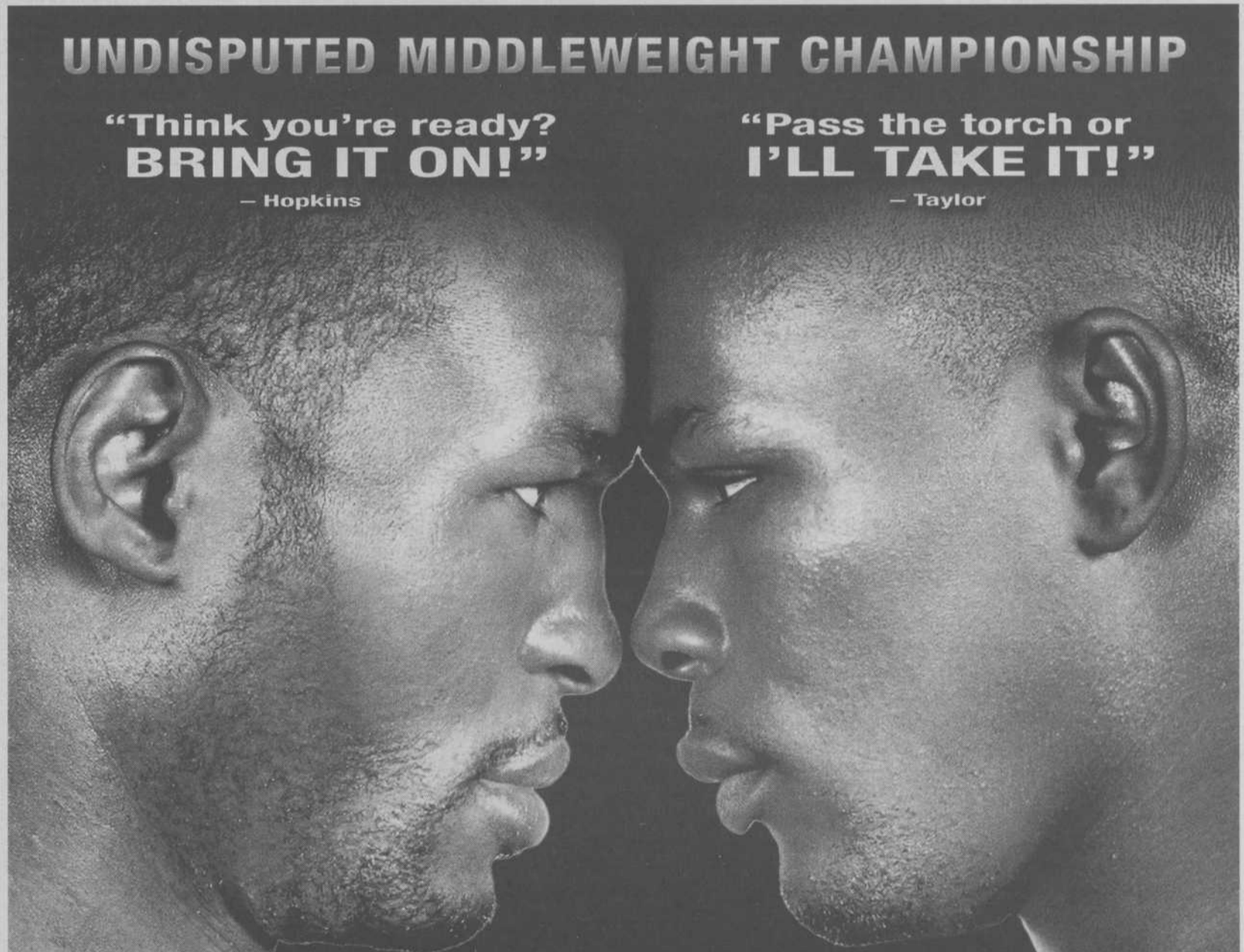
Rivera said he and his business partners were targets of a cross-burning and other harassment by Whites who want to run them out of business.

He said he reported the cross-burning to police and City Council, but the burners of the cross claimed it was
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