

Antifascist Toolkit:

Portland's Antifascist History



ROSE CITY ANTIFA

Portland's Antifascist History

Originally published for May Day 2018, the content of this zine was as much a response to the rapid gentrification of the city of Portland as it was a response to the Trump presidency. In order to try to preserve some of the antifascist stories that have shaped our organizing, we focused on highlighting site-specific histories from across Portland.

For years, Portland has been a focal point of white supremacist organizing and violence. It was once known as “skinhead city” and was the epicenter of the street level war between white supremacist gangs and anti-racist skinheads in the late 80s and early 90s. While white supremacist groupings changed their trappings over time and adapted to make themselves more appealing to new bodies of recruits, the PNW continues to be a region that is attractive to white supremacists.

On the other side of the coin, Portland also has one of the longest histories of antifascist resistance in the US. It has been an exemplary model of cooperation and solidarity which can be instructive to antifascists organizing today. This is a torch we at RCA are proud to carry. In Portland a wide array of people from all walks of life stood together using a variety of skills and methods to take back their city from the neo-Nazis that terrorized the streets. LGBTQ community members, immigrants, punks, ministers, anti-racist skinheads, black and brown activists, parents, union members, and countless others performed acts of bravery and heroism that have not been recorded in any history book. This project is about telling those stories.



For further information about our organizing
visit us at our website:

rosecityantifa.org

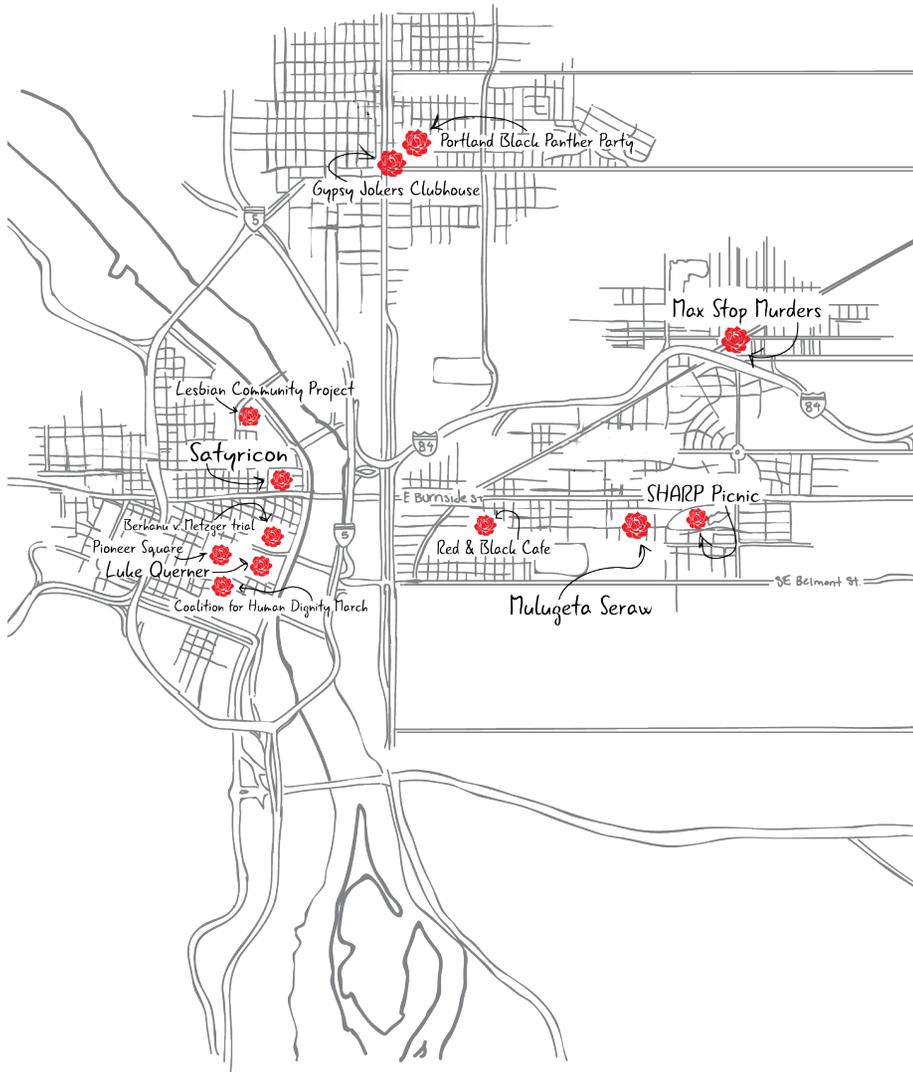
If you have any information about racist or
fascist organizing in your area you can email
us at:

fight_them_back@riseup.net



Eric Banks 13076 SE Stark St

On January 1st 1993, anti-racist skinhead John Bair shot and killed racist bonehead Eric Banks. Banks was best known as the singer for the neo-Nazi band Bound for Glory. A truce meeting between anti-racist skinheads and a group of boneheads devolved into an argument, so both groups left. Shortly thereafter, cars carrying the two crews pulled into the Mini Mart Quick Shop parking lot. An altercation between them ensued, which ended with Banks being shot. Bair was convicted of manslaughter, sentenced to 5 years in prison, and ordered to pay restitution to cover Banks' funeral expenses.



Rally That Started RCA Lents Park

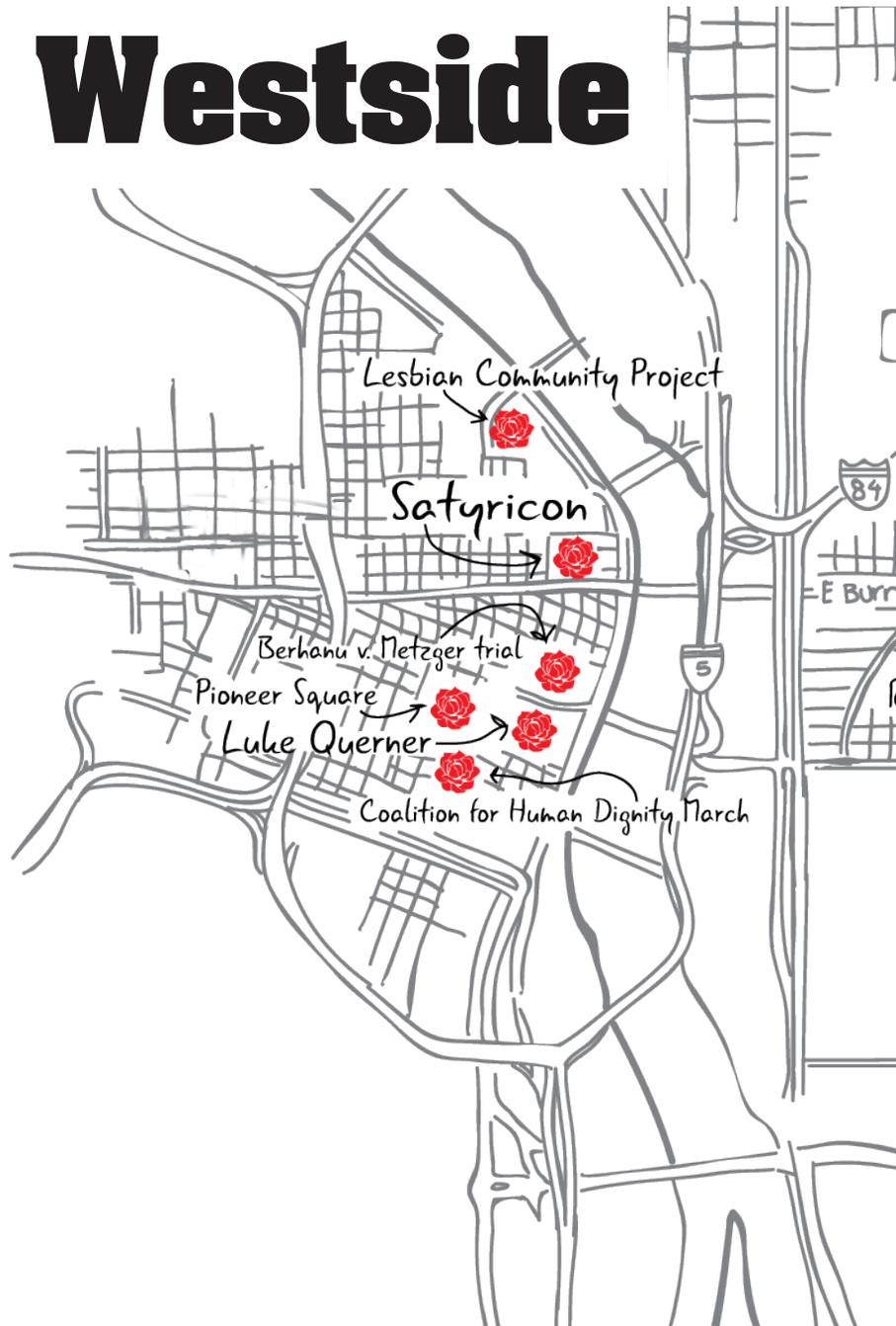
In October 2007 the Ad-Hoc Coalition Against Racism and Fascism held a rally in Lents Park with anti-racist speakers, performers, and free food. The Ad-Hoc Coalition was created to oppose a fascist festival called Hammerfest which drew over 100 neo-Nazis to Portland. While the rally was happening, some Coalition members drove around doing recon, which allowed organizers to discover the location of the Hammerfest and shut it down. After this event there was a debrief where several core organizers decided to form a group to do ongoing work opposing fascism in Portland: Rose City Antifa.

Volksfront Randy Krager's Old House, 2632 SE 136th

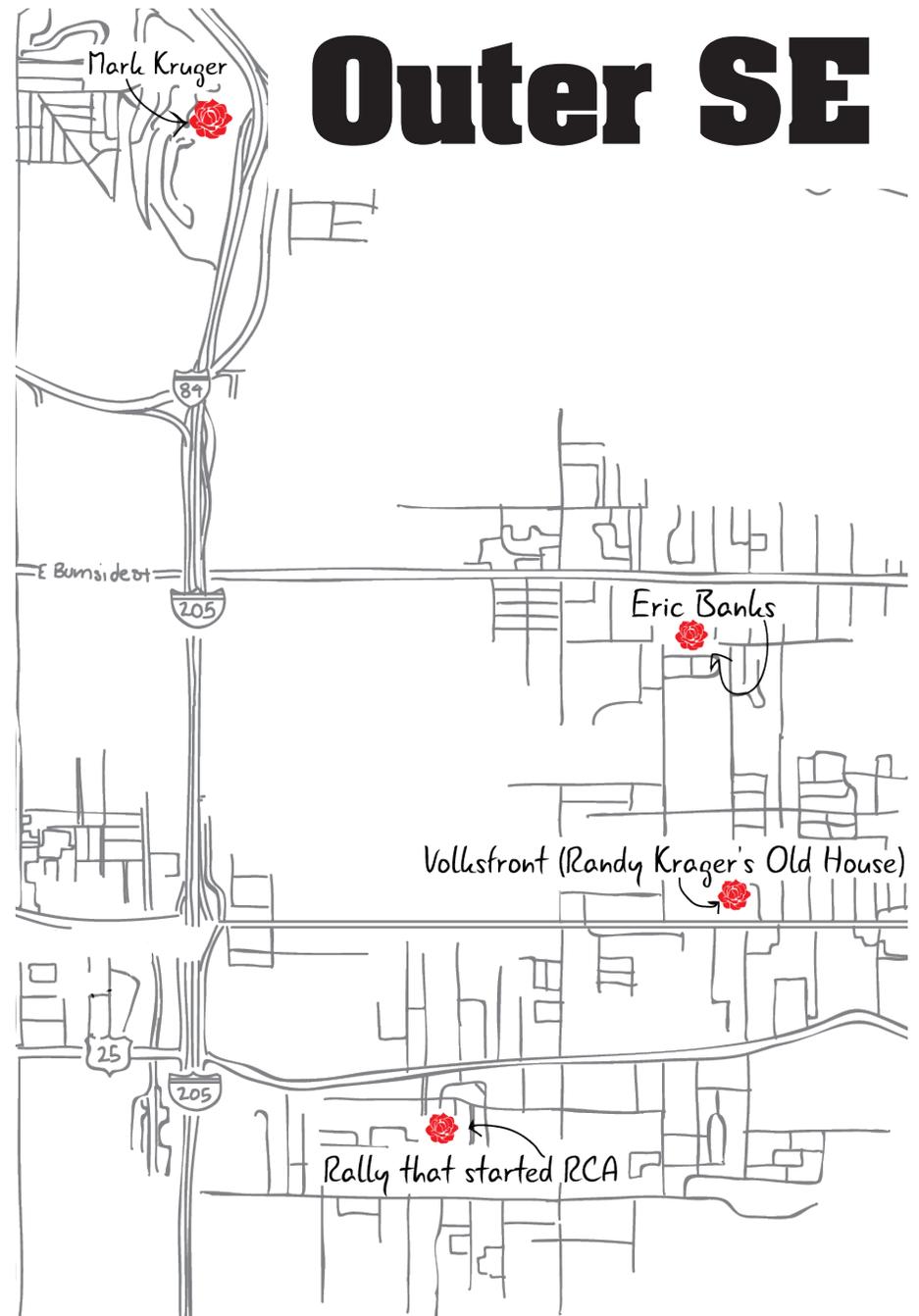
Volksfront was an international white supremacist group that was founded in the Oregon prison system in 1994 by Randy Krager and Richard Arden. Upon their release from prison, the gang was based out of Portland. Volksfront was a primary target of RCA during our beginning years. We did home demos including a door to door canvas of this neighborhood. We got Krager and his wife Abbie Chelf, also a white supremacist, evicted from this house. Our relentless campaign of getting VF members fired and evicted--along with other tactics and allies' support--exploited weaknesses, increased their paranoia, and finally caused the group to fold in 2012.



Westside



Outer SE



Mark Kruger Rocky Butte

In 2010 Mark Kruger of the Portland Police Bureau was briefly suspended after it was revealed that he erected memorial plaques to Nazi soldiers in Rocky Butte Park between 1999 and 2001. This information surfaced in the 2003 litigation against the city due to Kruger's excessive use of force against anti-war protesters. This behavior was not uncommon for the captain, who was known for listening to recordings of Hitler's speeches while driving his car and yelling homophobic and racist slurs. Despite the serious evidence against him, the city promoted him to Lieutenant in 2004 and to then Captain of the Police Bureau in 2009.

Gypsy Jokers Clubhouse 3535 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd

The Gypsy Jokers are a notorious 1%er white power bike gang, with a clubhouse formerly on NE MLK Blvd and Fremont (the clubhouse moved in 2017). White power bikers tend to be less motivated by ideology and more by criminal affiliation, so they are not a top focus of antifascist research. However, white power bikers can cause a lot of terror for communities of color, especially when gathering in their neighborhood. Gypsy Jokers may not be organizing politically, but they are certainly prepared to instigate violence. Portland Jokers got a lot of press for the brutal murder of their former member, Robert Huggins, in July of 2015.



Coalition for Human Dignity March PSU Park Blocks

Coalition for Human Dignity was the largest grassroots organization fighting white supremacists in Portland in the late 80s and early 90s. CHD did both public mass organizing and worked closely with militant groups. In October 1990 CHD held a march with partners Lesbian Community Project, ARA, SHARP and over 30 other community groups. 5,000 people marched from the site of Mulugeta Seraw's 1988 murder to a rally near Portland State University. PPB got PSU to pull the park permit, threatened to revoke the parade permit, and told media there were bombs along the route. Politicians were not allowed to speak at the rally.

Berhanu v. Metzger Multnomah County Courthouse, 1021 SW 4th

On October 25th, 1990 Mulugeta Seraw's father Berhanu, represented at no cost by the Southern Poverty Law Center, won a \$12.5 million judgement against Tom Metzger and his neo-Nazi group White Aryan Resistance (WAR) for their role in the murder of Mulugeta Seraw. Metzger's role included sending a WAR recruiter to organize local white supremacist bonehead gang East Side White Pride, encouraging, and supporting the group through literature and newsletters. After Seraw's murder, Metzger praised ESWP for doing its "civic duty." The judgement cost Metzger his house and largely reduced WAR to irrelevancy. Mulugeta's son, Henock, still receives monthly payments from the sale of WAR's assets.



Lesbian Community Project 800 NW 6th Ave Ste. 333

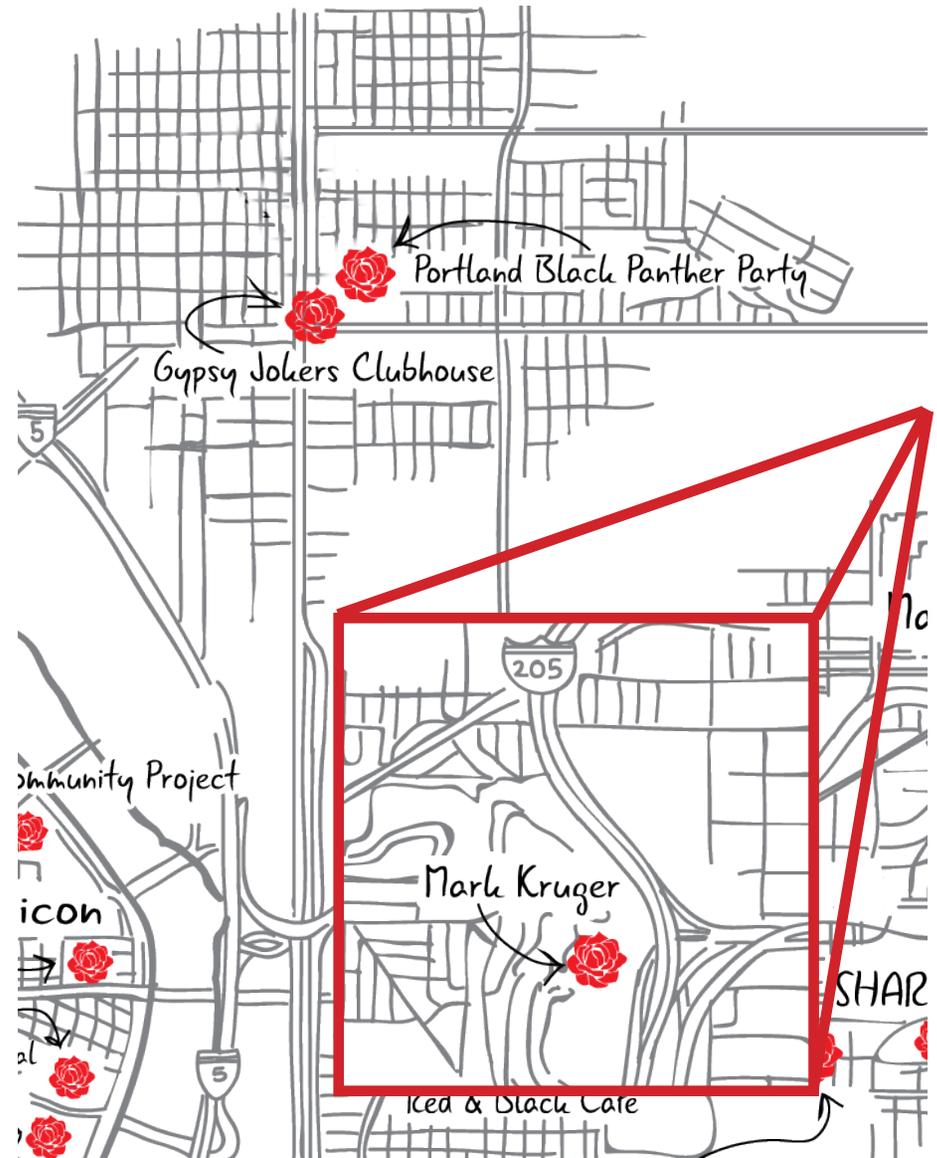
The Portland LGBTQ community was crucial in the fight against neo-Nazis in the 90s and beyond. Groups such as the Lesbian Community Project and ACT UP were a regular part of alliances with ARA, CHD, and SHARP. Together these groups did home and work demos to expose and shame neo-Nazis. Such groups also ran LGBTQ street patrols to keep people safe from fascist violence. Lesbian Community Project and other queer-led organizations helped organize the “Dignity and Diversity” week leading up to Metzger’s trial.

Luke Querner Kelly's Olympian, 426 SW Washington St

On March 27th 2010, anti-racist skinhead Luke Querner was ambushed and shot by an unknown assailant as he left the bar. The bullet hit his spine and left Luke paralyzed from the chest down. Ignoring compelling evidence of neo-Nazi involvement, PPB dismissed the shooting as gang-related. Their preliminary “investigation” produced no suspects, no charges, and no justice for Luke. The anti-racist community locally and worldwide has shown solidarity with Luke. Through benefit shows and social media he crowd-funded a treatment his insurance wouldn’t cover, which is helping to restore movement in his legs.



North/NE



Max Stop Murders Hollywood Transit Center

On May 26th 2017, white supremacist Jeremy Christian murdered Ricky Best and Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche and gravely injured Micah Fletcher aboard a MAX train. Christian was verbally threatening two women of color. Best, Namkai-Meche, and Fletcher intervened to defend them. Christian suddenly produced a knife and slashed the three men's throats. Namkai-Meche died on the train; Best died at the hospital; Fletcher recovered. Christian had previously attended a Patriot Prayer rally and has identified the double homicide as "free speech" and an act of "patriotism". Following the attack, there was a massive vigil for the men that lost their lives that day.

Portland Black Panther Party Irving Park

In a city that is overwhelmingly white, it is important to recognize the communities of color that work against and resist white supremacy. Black Portlanders have a long history of combating structural racism, insurgent white supremacist violence, and displacement via gentrification. Portland's own chapter of the Black Panther Party was founded in the summer of 1967 following demonstrations in Irving Park which were part of a nationwide uprising. The BPP set up a free health clinic, dental clinic, and breakfast program. They leave behind a legacy of self-determination and resistance.



Pioneer Square

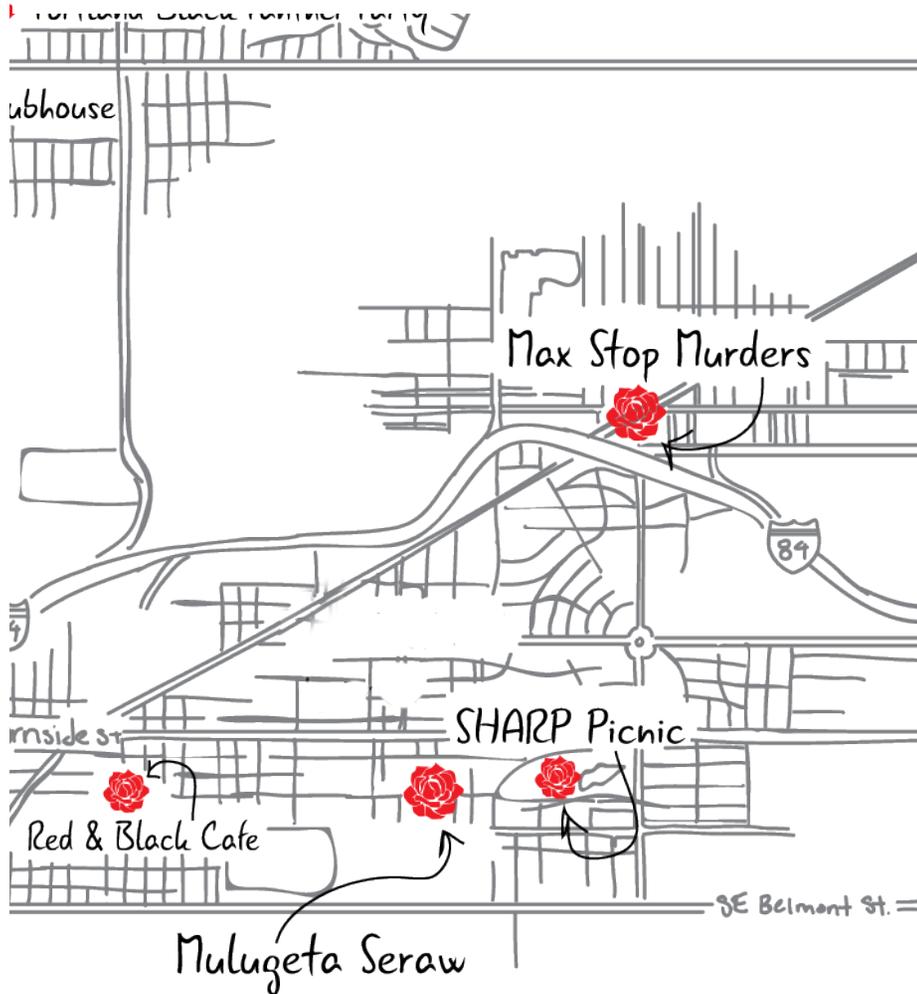
In the 80s and 90s Pioneer Square was a place where street youth and various subcultural groups intersected in the same space. As a visible hub of activity, it holds a lot of symbolic significance as contested territory. Various fights occurred here between racists and anti-racists; oral history passed down describes a particularly large fight during which anti-racists resoundingly defeated the fash with pipes and chains. Though some details may be blurred by time, Pioneer Square was a recurring site of anti-racist conflict until relatively recently.

Satyricon 125 N.W. Sixth Avenue

Satyricon, an Old Town venue, was a major contested space in the Portland punk scene. A neo-Nazi stabbed a man to death outside Satyricon in March 1986. ARA, SHARP, and anti-racist punks fought neo-Nazis here to keep them out of their subcultural sphere. Popular local punk bands such as Poison Idea and Sweaty Nipples spoke out against neo-Nazis in the 90s. Punks made anti-fascist artwork to stake out cultural space. Security at punk shows started turning neo-Nazis away at the door which led to boneheads using violence to try to get in. Even so, anti-racist punks and allies were relentless and would confront and eject neo-Nazis whenever they showed up.



Inner SE



Mulugeta Seraw SE 31st & Pine St.

On November 12th 1988, Kenneth Mieske and Kyle Brewster, members of the white supremacist gang East Side White Pride, beat Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw to death as he was returning home from a party. Mieske received life, Brewster 10 years, and Strasser 6 years. The murder of Mulugeta Seraw galvanized a large grassroots anti-racist movement in Portland. The Ethiopian immigrant community was very active in calling for justice for Seraw and in the overall effort to fight white supremacy in Portland. This also ultimately led to the highly publicized trial *Berhanu vs Metzger*.

SHARP Picnic Laurelhurst Park

On April 20th, 1991 local anti-racists held a picnic in Laurelhurst Park. The Oregonian published an article about the event which incorrectly stated that a neo-Nazi rally in the park had been broken up by police. In fact, the multi-racial group of activists had been subjected to harassment from PPB. The Oregonian had a tendency to publish articles that directly parroted law enforcement talking points. They ran 13 stories about SHARP during this time without interviewing a single member, using the term "gang" and otherwise painting the anti-racist skinheads in an unfavorable light.

