

Mira Ptacin
Peaks Island
LD 303

Dear Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and other members of the committee on criminal justice and public safety,

I'm here to testify in opposition to LD 303, 'An Act to Repeal the Law Prohibiting Unauthorized Paramilitary Training. My name is Mira Ptacin, and I am the author of *The Crash of the Hammer*, published in *The Atavist* this past October. I spent over 6 months researching the actions of The Blood Tribe and Christopher Polhaus, also known by the moniker HAMMER. I write to you today with deep concern about the growing and dangerous threat of unauthorized paramilitary training in Maine.

In my research, I have encountered disturbing figures and ideologies that, if left unchecked, could have devastating consequences for the people of this state. One such figure is Christopher Polhaus, whose violent tendencies, extremist beliefs, and involvement with groups like The Blood Tribe pose a serious risk to the safety and unity of Maine.

Polhaus is at the forefront of a dangerous and insidious movement that is rooted in hate, violence, and a delusional vision of racial purity. In March 2022, Hammer bought several acres of land in Springfield, Maine. He told his followers that he was going to use it to build a haven, operational center, and training ground for white supremacists. He invited them to join him. Together, he said, they would plant the seed of a white ethnostate, and they would engage in violence, if necessary, to nurture it. "An unarmed man sacrifices his family to the unpredictably [sic] of chaos," Hammer wrote online in 2021. His involvement with The Blood Tribe, an extremist group that believes in the supremacy of a "pure" white race, is particularly alarming. The Blood Tribe promotes an ideology that calls for violent action against those they consider "undesirable," including Jewish people, immigrants, and African Americans. They believe that society should be purged of these groups, and they advocate for the violent overthrow of governments they view as illegitimate. I should note that I never got a chance to talk to Hammer during my research, because he refused to talk to me. He said reporters are all liars, and that white women's role in society is to serve as "war brides"—in other words, to reproduce, against their will, the white race.

The ideology of The Blood Tribe is not just a theoretical or abstract belief—it is a call to arms. The group trains its members in paramilitary tactics, preparing them for a race war that they believe is imminent. They view figures like Adolf Hitler as not just historical figures, but as divine figures to be revered. Polhaus himself has publicly declared Hitler to be a deity, a belief that reinforces the group's neo-Nazi agenda and drives their violent actions. This kind of extremism is deeply rooted in hate and a dangerous revision of history, and it has no place in Maine—or anywhere else.

The actions and rhetoric of individuals like Polhaus and groups like The Blood Tribe pose a direct threat to the values we hold dear. Their hate-filled ideology seeks to divide us, to incite violence, and to spread fear and destruction. These individuals do not represent Maine's strong sense of community, safety, and respect for all people. Instead, they represent the kind of extremism that leads to terror and division. The spread of these beliefs and the establishment of unauthorized paramilitary training camps in our state only serve to further radicalize vulnerable individuals. It is essential that we take immediate action to shut down these dangerous operations and prevent the spread of hate-driven violence. The risks of inaction are too great; we cannot afford to wait until it is too late.

Maine must remain a place where all people, regardless of their race, religion, or background, are welcomed, respected, and protected. The rise of groups like The Blood Tribe threatens not only the safety of individuals but also the very values that make Maine a place worth living. If we allow these hate-driven groups to operate unchecked, we are giving them the space to grow and spread their dangerous ideologies.

For the sake of our communities, our families, and our future, I urge you to take immediate steps to prohibit unauthorized paramilitary training in Maine and to take a strong stand against the violent ideologies propagated by figures like Christopher Polhaus and extremist groups like The Blood Tribe. We cannot allow hate to fester in our state.

I first heard the buzz about Hammer not in the papers or on Crash's podcast, but from my church's pastor Rev. Will. The concept of the paradox of tolerance is usually credited to the Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper. In his work *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, published near the end of World War II, Popper writes in an extensive footnote: If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant ... then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them.... We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal. Boiled down: If we tolerate hate, we run the risk of tacitly supporting it.

Reverend Will used Hammer to illustrate his point that, by accepting all types and all sides, whatever our intentions in doing so, we give oxygen to those who would cause irreparable damage to our polity and civil society. "We should be very concerned about a neo-Nazi training camp in our neighborhood," Reverend Will said from the pulpit on a cool morning. Even if Hammer was exercising his constitutional rights to free speech and privacy, even if he had committed no crime, constructive intervention was still possible. "Rather than hiding behind tolerance, we should do the hard work of helpfully intervening for the sake of our community," Reverend Will continued. "That requires both spiritual self-examination and social, political engagement. It isn't spiritual to rise above it. Instead, our spirituality should equip us to get down to it."

Thank you in advance for your time.

Best,
Mira Ptacin
Peaks Island, Maine