


A MESSAGE TO YOU,

# SKINHEAD

ERSH






AN ENGLISH NEWSPAPER ONCE PRINTED A PHOTOGRAPH FROM A CONCERT. YOU COULD SEE A CROWD OF SKINHEADS RIOTING UNDER THE OVERTLY NATIONALISTIC LOGAN, "OUR RACE IS OUR RELIGION."

THE POINT WAS UNAMBIGUOUS. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM THESE GUYS.

BUT THE STORY WAS NOT EXACTLY AS IT FIRST APPEARED.



IT TURNED OUT THAT THE "RACIST RIOT" WAS ACTUALLY THE AUDIENCE OF CONCERT BY THE BLACK SINGER LAUREL AITKEN, AUTHOR OF THE SONG "SKINHEAD".

THE FIRST SKINHEADS APPEARED IN THE UK IN THE MID-SIXTIES. A LONG TIME AGO, HUH? THEY WERE YOUNG WORKING CLASS KIDS, WHO TOOK THE UTILITARIAN CLOBBER OF THEIR FATHERS — HEAVY COATS, PLAID SHIRTS, JEANS (WHICH WERE STRICTLY WORKERS' CLOTHES), AND HEAVY BOOTS WITH RUBBER SOLES — AND ADAPTED IT INTO A HIGHLY STYLISED YOUTH MOVEMENT, WITH UNIQUE TASTES IN MUSIC AND FASHION.



A SHAVED HEAD  
(SKINHEAD)

A POLO OR A PLAID  
SHIRT WITH A  
BUTTON-UP  
COLLAR

BRACES.  
THEY'RE CRUCIAL.

ROLLED UP LEVIS,  
SHOWING OFF  
THE

DOC MARTEN'S  
BOOTS.

THEIR TASTES WERE SIMPLE —  
CLOTHES,  
SCOOTERS  
AND MUSIC,  
A COMING  
TOGETHER  
OF BRITISH  
'MOD' AND WEST  
INDIAN  
'RUDE BOY'  
CULTURES.



THE SOUNDTRACK TO THIS MOVEMENT  
WAS BLACK MUSIC FROM JAMAICA



SKA, REGGAE,  
BEBOP AND  
ROCK—STEADY.

THEY WOULD DANCE WITH THEIR GIRLS IN CHEAP CLUBS IN  
PROVINCIAL ENGLISH TOWNS.

SO HOW DID THE WORD "SKINHEAD" BECOME A SYMBOL OF HATE TOWARDS PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT COLOURS? IN THE UK, THE USA, AND RUSSIA, THE COUNTRIES THAT BATTLED FASCISM AND WON, HOW COULD KIDS DISRESPECT WHAT THEIR GRANDPARENTS FOUGHT FOR, AND FORGET THEIR OWN ROOTS

?



THIS IS A PICTURE OF A TYPICAL SKINHEAD GANG FROM THE LATE SIXTIES OR EARLY SEVENTIES. BLACKS AND WHITES WERE UNITED BY A LOVE FOR THEIR HOMETOWN, PRIDE IN THEIR FRIENDS, AND DIGNITY. THAT DIGNITY, PASSED DOWN FROM THEIR WORKING PARENTS, WOULDN'T ALLOW EARLY SKINHEADS TO DISRESPECT THEIR OWN KIND, OTHER REGULAR GUYS, EVEN WITH DIFFERENT COLOURED SKIN.



OF COURSE, THEY WEREN'T GOODY TWO-SHOES. THESE WERE WORKING CLASS TRIBES FROM THE EDGE OF TOWN, AND REVELRY AND FIGHTING COULD OFTEN SPILL FROM THE PUBS AND CLUBS ON THE STREETS.



THAT'S UNFORTUNATE, OF COURSE.

BUT IT WAS JUST YOUR USUAL TEENAGE HOOLIGANISM.

MAN, IF YOU WANNA HANG WITH US, WE FIGHT WITH EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF RACE, NATIONALITY, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS, GOT IT?



BASED ON A SKINHEAD CARICATURE FROM THE SEVENTIES.

BUT SKINHEADS WERE GREAT MATERIAL FOR TABLOID JOURNALISTS. THEY WERE PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1, AND CHILLING TALES ABOUT THEM SOLD PAPERS. THE SKINHEADS COMPLAINED THAT THE STORIES WERE MADE UP, FACTS WERE MISCONSTRUED AND BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION. BUT WHO CARES WHAT "THOSE YOB'S" HAVE TO SAY?



POLITICAL BIGWIGS STARTED TO CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH HOOLIGANS AND BRAWLERS.





THE END OF THE SEVENTIES. GROWING  
UNEMPLOYMENT HEIGHTENED THE TENSION  
BETWEEN  
PEOPLE.



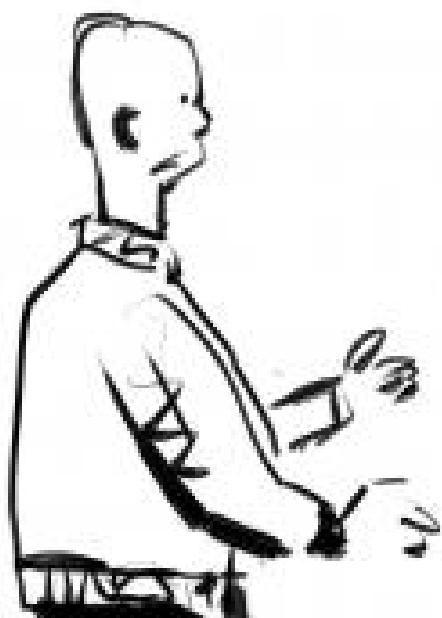
AT THE SAME TIME MANY  
BLACK SKINHEADS HAD  
ABANDONED THE MOVEMENT  
FOR RASTAFARI.



THE REST JOINED THE  
PUNKS AND CREATED THE  
HARD AND FAST MUSICAL  
STYLE "OJ".



AT THAT POINT RADICAL NATIONALIST POLITICIANS SAW THEIR CHANCE. THEY CAME TO THE AID OF THE SKINHEADS AND STARTED TO ORGANISE THEIR MUSIC FESTIVALS AND SPONSOR INDIVIDUAL GROUPS, GETTING IN RETURN THEIR VOTES AND FISTS.

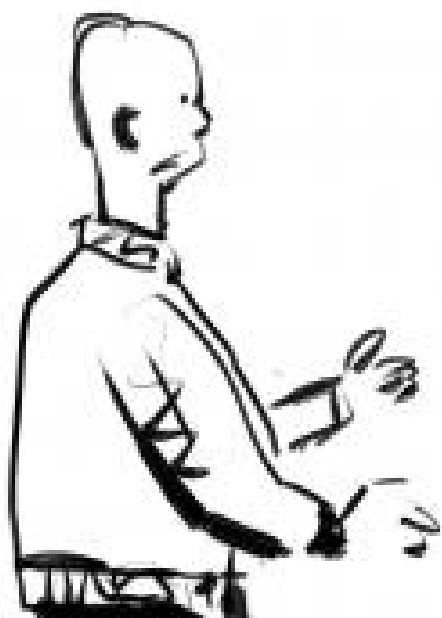


SKINHEADS WERE DIVIDED YET AGAIN. SOME OF THEM LEFT TO JOIN THE NEO-NAZIS, BUT MOST OF THEM REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THEIR ORIGINAL IDEALS.



HONOUR, DIGNITY,  
AND SELF-RESPECT  
WITHOUT PREJUDICE

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THE NEWS OF THE NEO-NAZI SKINHEADS WAS A GIFT FOR THE PRESS. PANIC IS THEIR BREAD AND BUTTER.



THE SITUATION BENEFITTED EVERYONE — THE RIGHT, THE LEFT, THE PRESS...



NOW ANY ASSHOLE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WHO DECIDED THAT HE FOUND A SIMPLE ANSWER TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS KNEW THAT THE FIRST THING HE HAD TO DO IS SHAVE HIS HEAD.



THEY THINK BEATING UP AND KILLING FOREIGNERS AND UNCOOPERATIVE POLITICIANS WILL SOLVE ALL THEIR PROBLEMS.



ACTUALLY THIS JUST RESULTS IN BROKEN LIVES AND LONG PRISON SENTENCES. AND THE PROBLEMS HAVEN'T GONE AWAY.



THIS SITUATION INCENSED TRADITIONAL SKINHEADS. ANTI-FASCIST BANDS LIKE SHARP, RUSH, AND OTHERS STARTED TO APPEAR. FIGHTS BROKE OUT WITH A NEW FEROCITY, NOW BETWEEN SKINHEADS.



HUMAN LIVES ARE DESTROYED, PEOPLE ARE KILLED IN SENSELESS FIGHTS, AND THE PROBLEMS REMAIN. WE BURN WITH RAGE AND IMPOTENCE, AND POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS MAKE CAREERS ON OUR BLOOD.



I WALK DOWN MY STREET, AROUND MY BLOCK, AND THROUGH MY NEIGHBORHOOD. I HAVE NO ENEMIES HERE, THERE'S NO ONE I FEEL ANY HATE TOWARDS. BECAUSE HATE IS FEAR, AND FEAR IS A LACK OF DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT. THIS IS MY HOME, AND I LIVE MY LIFE AS BEST AS I KNOW HOW. I GO MY OWN WAY. I HOLD MY FATE IN MY OWN HANDS, AND I'M NOT GOING TO DESTROY IT TO BENEFIT SOME POLITICIAN.

AND WHEN I MEET SOMEONE ELSE LIKE ME, WHO PUSHED HATE OUT OF HIS MIND AND STAYED TRUE TO HIMSELF, I SAY TO HIM:

— RESPECT, BROTHER!

