

# Speakers denounce 'web of hate'

By RENA FULKA  
SPECIAL WRITER

Michael Simon was 3 years old when he received his first computer. By age 12, the Birmingham resident was surfing his way through the vast, multimedia information system known as the World Wide Web.

"The Internet is part of my life," said the 17-year-old president of Birmingham-based Cracked Planet, an Internet marketing company. "Just as I have the physical community around me, I also have the Internet."

What troubles Simon about the Internet is its dark side, which he stumbled across as an eighth grader tapping into a search engine to complete a research paper. Among the hits listed under the reference, "Holocaust," is a visual exploitation of Anti-Semitism aimed at Holocaust denial.

"It hurt me," recalled Simon, who discovered just how easy it is to call up an estimated 300 hate sites from the school library or in the privacy of his own home. "These things are disrupting my community."

On Dec. 4, the Birmingham Seaholm High School junior voiced his concerns as one of five panelists presenting, "Web of Hate: Anti-Semitism and Extremism on the Internet."

Sponsored by the Southfield-based Anti-Defamation League and the Bloomfield Hills Schools, the forum at the Andover High School Theater drew an attentive crowd of 100 individuals crossing three generations.

Other panelists included Donald Cohen, Michigan regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, David Goldman, Massachusetts-based Harvard Law library researcher and director of Hatewatch, Dr. Jack Kay, professor of communication at Detroit-based Wayne State University, and John Ohm, a representative of the internal affairs at the Internal Revenue Service.

The hour-long panel discussion and visual demonstration concluded with a brief question and answer session and plans to monitor the hate sites that transcend geographical boundaries.

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Mike Simon, 17, president of Birmingham-based Cracked Planet, an Internet solutions firm, related his own experiences in stumbling upon hate sites while doing research for school projects.

John Ohm of the Internal Revenue Service spoke of Internet anonymity, which only adds to the problem. "The Internet is set up almost as an advertising agency. You submit your information to a search engine and they do the rest. It's automatic," said Ohm. "We're just learning how to deal with it and we want to be well informed, and we want to ensure that you are well informed, too."

Concluding the panel discussion was David Gold, a Harvard Law library researcher and director of Hatewatch, a web-based organization to expose and counter hate sites on the Internet. "You can either help monitor and actively engage yourself in it, or be complacent, which is equal to participating with these groups," said Gold. "Our silence is our complicity."

Dr. Jack Kay, professor of communications at Detroit-based Wayne State University, discussed "very grabbing sites" encouraging participation and recruitment through chat rooms, news groups and e-mail.



PHOTO BY BILL HANSEN

**Attentive:** There's no confusing the look of concern on the face of Susan Borin of West Bloomfield as she listens to panelists speaking about hate on the Internet.

and speak out publicly against it.

"The Internet, along with the TV and radio, is becoming a very valid source of information," said Simon, who is active in the Internet scene and a number of Jewish organizations. "The Internet is coming into people's homes. They need to be able to apply a filter to this information."

The presentation had a strong impact on Linda Zlotoff of Bloomfield Hills, an educator and Internet user who has worked in crisis intervention and with Pontiac-based Common Ground.

"The formulas for making bombs right on the screen in front of you was remarkable in terms of how to create your own destructive element," said the mother of two teens. "I'm concerned about other groups in the community. I see very disturbed kids in broken families that can be drawn into this very easily. I see the darkness that exist."

"It was nice to see this type of panel addressing the issue and to know that there are organizations like Hatewatch and the

many web pages with hate. It gave me a great insight on what was happening in the world and to know that there's something I can do to educate people about the garbage going on the Internet."

Elissa Lindow, 16, a junior at North Farmington High in Farmington Hills, has experienced the dark side of the Internet firsthand. "I've seen racial slurs and pictures that I'd rather not see," said Lindow. "I've always been raised that hate is a strong word."

Elissa Lindow seemed further disturbed by the web page portrayals of Jews as rats that was called up during the forum. "I think these discussions are extremely important for people to be knowledgeable of what goes on."

Gillian Sharkey, 15, of Farmington Hills, does not have access to Internet at home, but she does tap into cyberspace at Walled Lake Western High School, where she is a sophomore. "This hurts because people are hurting others for their religion, race and what they believe in and not for the actual people that they are," said Sharkey. "I didn't know there were that

many web pages with hate. It gave me a great insight on what was happening in the world and to know that there's something I can do to educate people about the garbage going on the Internet."

The Anti-Defamation League

has been exposing hate and bigotry and developing effective countermeasures for eight decades. It has 32 regional and satellite offices throughout the country. In the near future, the ADL will be making blocking software available to Internet users wishing to filter hate sites from their home computers.

For more information, call (248) 355-3730, or visit [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org) and [www.hate-watch.org](http://www.hate-watch.org).

**■ 'It hurt me. These things are disrupting my community.'**

Michael Simon  
—Birmingham resident



**Idea exchanger:** Seaholm High student Michael Simon (center), president of Cracked Planet, an Internet marketing company, is flanked by (left) Dr. Jack Kay, a Wayne State professor, and David Gold (right), a Harvard Law Library researcher and director of Hatewatch.

**Kickoff comments:** West Bloomfield's Donald Cohen, Michigan regional director of the Anti-Defamation League, makes a point before the panel discussion begins.

**Dark side:** Elissa Lindow, North Farmington High junior, has experienced the dark side of the web.

## ADL spotlights dark side of the Internet

By RENA FULKA  
SPECIAL WRITER

The Southfield-based Anti-Defamation League originally scheduled a discussion on the dark side of the Internet for a board meeting. But due to the importance of the subject, the visual presentation, "Web of Hate: Anti-Semitism and Extremism on the Internet" was opened to the public on Dec. 4 at Andover High School in Bloomfield Hills.

A panel of five experts addressed the issues to 100 attentive listeners. Donald Cohen, ADL Michigan regional director, began the visible demonstration by reviewing President Clinton's State of the Union address referring to the Internet as the "New Town Square" in which everyone is connected.

"Extremists are now welcome in Town Square," said Cohen.

Cohen proceeded to demonstrate the easy availability of hate sites offering hard-to-find books like Jewish Ritual Murder by Arnold Leese, a "Hang Leroy" game accessed through a site of the Delaware Region of the Ku Klux Klan, hate music by Resistance Records and dozens of bomb-making recipes. Other web pages explore Nazism, Now, Holocaust denial, militia groups and Anti-Semitic theology on Sedline Ideology.

Dr. Jack Kay, professor of communications at Detroit-based Wayne State University, discussed "very grabbing sites" encouraging participation and recruitment through chat rooms, news groups and e-mail.

## Senate defeats Peters' bills on assisted suicide

By TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Merian's Friends, the Northville-based group seeking a statewide vote on regulating assisted suicide, will have an uphill battle in the wake of two state Senate votes.

It will have to conduct a 260,000-signature petition drive to place its proposal before voters in November of 1998 — "which is a monumental job unless you have a lot of money," said Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township.

"It's not like you had casino money supporting the drive. The track record (for volunteer-run petition drives) is never very good," he said.

Peters and Bob Moreillon, spokesman for Merian's Friends, said polls show 57 to 60 percent of voters would favor a law regulating physician-assisted suicide. The group is named for Merian

Fredericks, a client of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

During the Dec. 4 Senate vote, Peters proposed a short-cut to a petition drive, putting on the ballot both Senate Bill 200, to outlaw assisted suicide, and SB 653, Peters' regulatory bill that is similar to the Merian's Friends proposal.

His amendment, which required a two-thirds vote, fell 72-24. Local senators voting yes were Peters and Alma Wheeler-Smith, D-Salem, and five other Democrats. There was no record roll call.

### How they voted

Instead, the Senate approved SB 200 by a vote of 28 to 7. How is how area senators voted:

Yes — Loren Bennett, R-Canton, Michael Bouchard, R-Bloomfield, John Cherry, D-Clio, Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion,

Robert Gunkle, R-Northville, George Z. Hart, D-Deerborn, Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, John Schwarz, R-Battle Creek.

No — Peters and Alma Smith, Absent — Bill Bullard Jr., R-Milford.

### SB 200 declares:

■ Assisting in a suicide is punishable by up to four years in prison and a fine of up to \$2,000.

■ A person who knowingly or intentionally by force or coercion causes an individual to commit suicide is guilty of murder.

■ Exempts "withholding or withdrawing medical treatment."

■ Exempts administration of pain-killers, "even if the medication may hasten or increase the risk of death," if certain medical requirements are met. Bouchard proposed this provision.

### Euthanasia feared

Sponsor is Sen. William VanRegenmorter, R-Jenison, who held extensive public hearings during fall.

Speaking of Dr. Kevorkian, who has assisted in an estimated 71 suicides in Michigan, VanRegenmorter said, "Most were not immediately dying. Many were not even terminally ill. Four young women weren't ill at all."

SB 200 is the Legislature's second attempt to outlaw assisted suicide. An earlier law was "sun-setted" after four years and no convictions.

Bouchard pointed to the Netherlands, saying 1,000 people a year are euthanized (subjected to mercy killing). They fear assisted suicide will evolve into euthanasia.

Elderly people's fear is so great, said VanRegenmorter, that groups are giving senior citizens cards saying, "If I'm hospitalized, don't kill me."

VanRegenmorter scoffed at the polls cited by Peters and Merian's Friends. "It (favorable view of assisted suicide) depends on how you ask the question. But the numbers drop dramatically when you talk about hospice care and pain relief."

"At our public hearings, people were 2-1 in support of SB 200."

Opposing Peters' amendment to put SB 200 on the ballot, VanRegenmorter said, "We're not elected to put our fingers in the wind and look at polls."

"If someone wants to take his own life, they can find ways to do it," said Sen. John Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, the Senate's only physician. "The question is getting someone to help. It's tantamount to murder."

"The physician should be allowed to administer an opiate and morphine. As the doses become closer, one depresses the respiratory effort," he said, with

the result being death.

### Peters' bill nixed

Opposed was Sen. Jim Berryman, D-Adrian. "People will find a way (to end life). No one should have to go into the basement with a gun. No one should have to find his father hanging in the garage."

Two days earlier, VanRegenmorter's Senate Judiciary Committee rejected Peters' SB 653, which is similar to the Merian's Friends initiative. It would:

■ Limit the option of assisted suicide to Michigan residents who are terminally ill and have six months or less to live.

■ Require patients to get two doctors' opinions state the illness is terminal.

■ Require patients to undergo psychological counseling.

■ Limit methods to doctor-prescribed medication.