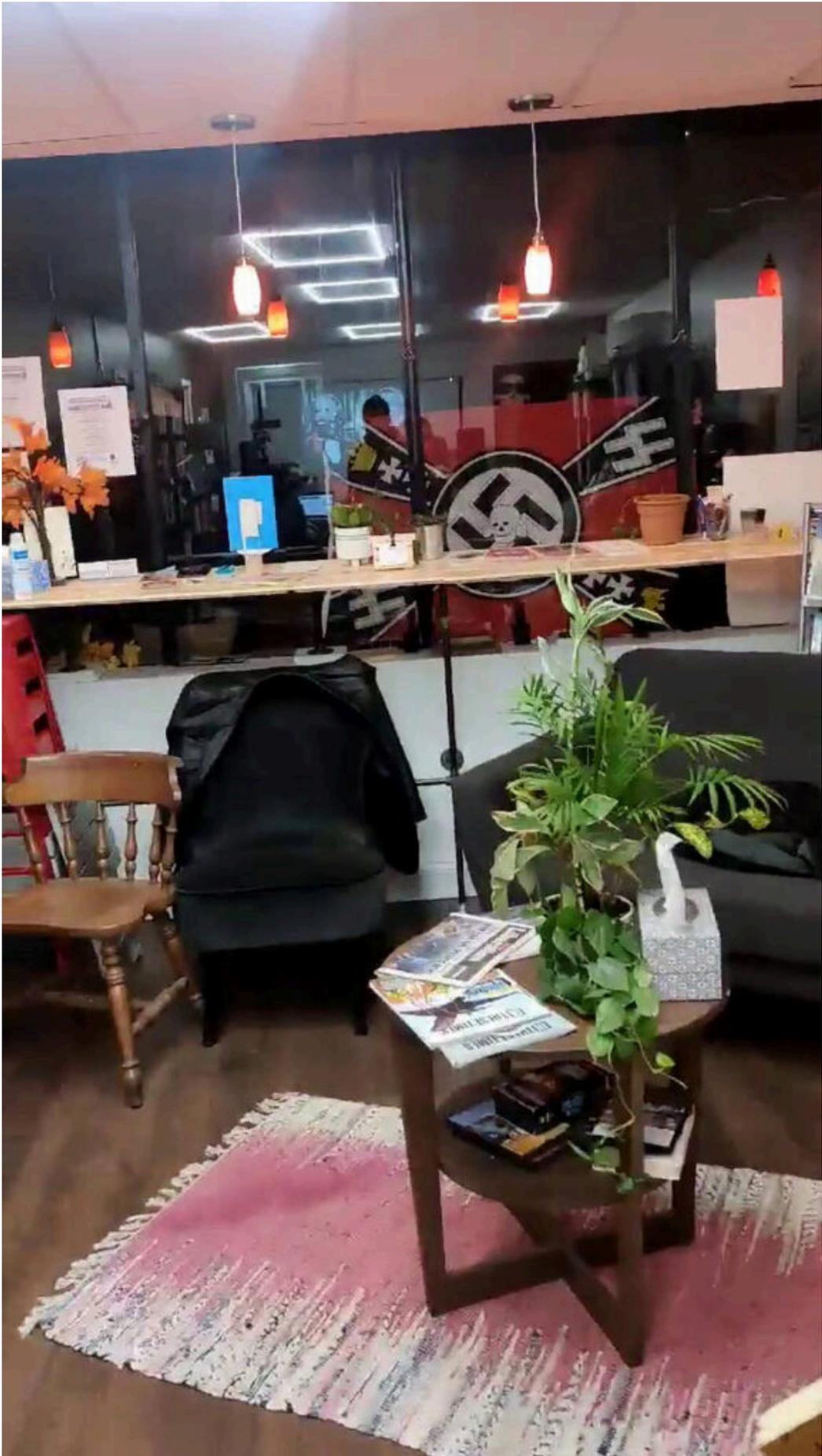


Neo-Nazi Protesters at Red Ink: Disrupt community library reading

Neo-Nazi protesters waving flags emblazoned with a swastika, "SS" runes, and a "Totenkopf" (death's head) disrupted an event at Red Ink Community Library on Cypress Street near Billy Taylor Park in Providence. The reading at 6pm on Monday, Feb 21, was intended to commemorate the 174th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto* as part of international Red Books Day.

"The Red Ink Community Library is an independent... lending library and reading room, and organizing space in the Mount Hope neighborhood of Providence," **David Raileanu**, director of Red Ink, told *Motif*. "We had about six or seven people indoors plus another 10 or so who were watching the live stream" on Facebook, he said.



Neo-Nazi flag displayed outside Red Ink Community Library, Feb 21, 2022. (Source: Still frame extracted from video on Twitter)

“It was around 6:40pm when there was a loud banging on the windows as well as shouting, some yelling coming from the sidewalk in the street. A couple of our members went outside to see what was going on and it was very apparent that a group of people who were wearing insignia associated with fascist and nazi groups were attempting to disrupt and ultimately disband our meeting,” Raileanu said. “It was very, very disruptive. So the people who went outside – I personally didn’t go outside and see what was happening – but the people who did told me that there were at least 20 or 30 people and as many as possibly 50 people outside. And so, being so significantly outnumbered, it was safer for all of us to stay indoors and tell them to go home and leave us alone. They did not do that. Apparently some people in the neighborhood called the police and after seven or eight minutes, five or six squad cars showed up and the disruptors outside started to disband.” A video clip of the angry demonstration was shared widely on social media

Asked about the reaction to the protest, Raileanu said, “I was inside. My perception was that it was terrifying, that there was a palpable sense of fear among the group, and yet everybody remained calm and resilient and maintained an admirable sense of poise in the face of what appeared to be imminent danger.”

Raileanu said no one in his organization called the police. On Twitter, the Red Ink account wrote, “The Nazis continued to put on their show until Providence Police asked them to leave. While we didn’t ask for help from the police, it was only the threat of state violence that ended this disruption.”

“They were shouting for probably 10 minutes, I think, and then it was another 10 minutes or so [after the police began to arrive], so altogether the incident lasted less than 30 minutes. We were able to regroup as a meeting around 7:15pm,” Raileanu said. “The police came back and spoke to us. They said that they saw the people who came to disrupt the meeting get into their cars and go home, but that they would leave a squad car here just to make sure that we were able to finish.” Raileanu said he was not aware of any personal injury or property damage.

According to the Providence Police report, at about 6:40pm, “District 8 and 9 received information and were advised a group of Neo Nazis were proceeding to the Red Ink Community Library... to interrupt the individuals who were inside attending a reading... Upon arrival we observed approximately 15-20 subjects (from the Neo Nazi group) standing outside and striking the front window of the Red Ink Community Library with their hands. As soon as all of the District 8 and 9 cars arrived on scene with the overhead emergency lights on, the neo-Nazi crowd began to disperse... Police did not observe any damage to the building.” The report confirms that a police car and an officer remained on the scene until about 8:15pm without further incident. The report also specifies that the police body-worn cameras were activated, but the footage has yet to be made public.

No arrests or charges were reported. If the protesters stayed on the sidewalk, didn’t obstruct the storefront and committed no act of vandalism, then their actions may have been perfectly legal, regardless of the neo-Nazi banners and insignia, and as a result there was little the police could do to stop them beyond simply maintaining a presence.

Based on chants that included “131,” it is believed that the neo-Nazi protesters were affiliated with “NSC-131,” a Boston-based, far-right fascist group: “NSC” stands for “National Socialist Club” (“National Socialist” is the root of the term “Nazi”) and “131” is intended to represent the letters of the

alphabet "ACA" that stands for "Anti-Communist Action." The group claims to be active in the six New England states, including RI, and on fringe social media they frequently post video recordings of their protests. The FBI, with primary responsibility for monitoring organizations like NSC-131, declined comment to *Motif*.

"We had received a notice from Lucy Parsons Center and Democracy Center in Boston, back in October, that these kinds of groups did exist, and that we should be on the lookout for them," said Raileanu. NSC-131 orchestrated a similar demonstration at the Lucy Parsons Center and has been identified as the group responsible for hanging white supremacist banners from highway bridges.

According to Raileanu, "Nothing has ever happened to Red Ink in the past. This place has been a joyous place, a place of celebration of socialist values and a place where we have found community and promoted knowledge and education. There have been no incidents up to this point."

"We intend to be a celebration of socialist values: community, equality, knowledge and education," Raileanu said. "If we are on the opposite side of fascists and nazis, we are on the right side."

As a result of this incident, Red Ink has announced a virtual "community safety forum" at 11am, Saturday, Feb 26, on Zoom.

Additional reporting by Mike Ryan