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'Unsurprised': Dark truth behind ugly neo-Nazi protest

There is one simple reason that neo-Nazis swarmed an anti-trans rally in Victoria on Saturday, as one expert says he is "not surprised".

**Chloe Whelan** 4 min read March 21, 2023 - 10:45AM

There is a simple reason for the neo-Nazis who swarmed an anti-trans rights rally in Melbourne on Saturday, when considering the violent history of the notoriously exclusionary movement.

While the historic German Nazi Party is most infamous for its egregious violence towards Jews, who bore the brunt of its hatred with six million murdered, followers of the movement have a long history of targeting society's most vulnerable groups, according to Holocaust expert Dr David Slucki.

"It is shocking, but not surprising, to see neo-Nazis targeting trans people in Melbourne over the weekend," Dr Slucki, a Jewish culture lecturer at Monash University, told news.com.au.

"Among the Nazis' earliest target groups were queer people throughout Germany, deemed to be 'asocial' and 'sexually deviant'."

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Gay men in a Nazi concentration camp, where they were forced to wear a pink triangle. Picture: Holocaust Memorial Day

Approximately 100,000 gay men were arrested under Nazi laws that forbade homosexuality, of whom between 10,000 and 15,000 were sent to concentration camps. Their prospects were poor – an estimated 65 per cent were murdered, and many more died by suicide.

Unlike others who were persecuted by the Nazi regime, queer prisoners were not embraced as victims after the camps were liberated. In fact, with homosexuality still illegal across most of the West, many were transported directly to prison and remained there for decades.

On Saturday, modern supporters of this hate-filled movement crashed an anti-trans rally in Melbourne, where they stormed onto the steps of Victoria's parliament and performed the Nazi salute multiple times.

They were captured wearing all-black attire with some covering their faces with balaclava-like masks and holding a sign that read: "Destroy Paedo Freaks".



A Victorian Liberal MP faces being booted from the party over her attendance at the rally, while Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes announced the government would fast-track legislation to ban the Nazi salute – but Dr Slucki was not convinced.

“Banning the Nazi salute will help to reduce the presence of Nazi symbolism in public places, but it will do little to eradicate Nazism, which thrives in online spaces. A broader approach is needed to combat the growing far right,” he said.

“These Nazis will continue to target vulnerable groups and it is incumbent on political and community leaders not to use those groups as political pawns, which only empowers these groups.

“Governments must support the rights of trans people and the Queer community to show that this kind of hatred will not be tolerated in Victoria.”



Members of the National Socialist Movement perform the Nazi salute outside parliament at Melbourne's anti-trans rally this weekend. Picture: David Crosling/NCA NewsWire

Controversial Liberal MP Moira Deeming, who faces being dropped by her party after attending the anti-trans rally, insisted she did not endorse the neo-Nazis and was not aware of their presence.

"I am so distressed that nobody is listening to or addressing the concerns of women," she told the *Herald Sun*.

"Nobody endorsed those Nazis. We all condemned them. But nobody listened to what the women actually said."

In a livestream video filmed after the event, Ms Deeming claimed she wasn't aware there were Nazis at the rally until they started performing the Nazi salute.

"When I was alerted to the fact that there were all these masked men coming towards us ... I thought the trans activists had broken through the (police) line and we were about to be attacked," she said.

"The police, for some reason I do not understand, ushered them in, let them have photos on the steps next to us and instead of pushing them back out the same way they came in, they took them right through the middle of the buffer zone.

"And right as they were in the centre in front of all those cameras they did a Nazi salute and that's horrifying."



Liberal MP Moira Deeming, who faces being booted from her party over her attendance, says she condemned the Nazis. Picture: Sarah Matray

Opposition leader John Pesutto announced on Sunday he will move to expel Ms Deeming over her attendance at the rally.

“At our meeting I informed Ms Deeming that I will move a motion at the next party room meeting to expel her as a member of the parliamentary Liberal Party as her position is untenable,” Mr Pesutto said.

“The Liberal Party I joined and which I am now honoured to lead must strive to represent all Victorians. Regardless of religious faith, race, sexual preference and identity, Victorians everywhere should know that the Liberal Party is inclusive and can be a voice for them.”

Mr Andrews and Deputy Premier Jacinta Allan, meanwhile, slammed the protest.

“I wish it didn’t have to be said, but clearly it does: Nazis aren’t welcome,” Mr Andrews wrote on Twitter.

“Not on Parliament’s steps. Not anywhere.



Masked men performed Nazi salutes in Melbourne's CBD on Saturday. Picture: Twitter



Holocaust expert David Slucki said their attendance was 'not surprising'. Picture: David Crosling/NCA NewsWire

"They were there to say the trans community don't deserve rights, safety or dignity.

"That's what Nazis do. Their evil ideology is to scapegoat minorities – and it's got no place here. And those who stand with them don't, either."

Ms Deeming will learn her fate from Friday, as party rules require five days' notice before a member can be expelled.

The Victorian government is moving to fast-track a ban on the Nazi salute after Saturday's events.

"Victorians have zero tolerance of this behaviour and so do we," Attorney-General Symes said on Monday. "That's why we'll expand our nation-leading legislation banning the Nazi Hakenkreuz to include the Nazi salute – because everyone deserves to feel safe, welcome and included in Victoria.

"While we wish making these laws wasn't necessary and it will take some work, we want to be clear – we will always challenge anti-Semitism, hatred and racism from taking root in Victoria."

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