

HATE IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD

A MUTANTS & MASTERMINDS FREEDOM CITY ADVENTURE

BY D.T. BUTCHINO

What starts as a peaceful day in Freedom City slowly turns into a lesson in tolerance, as the heroes must defend the city from a hate-monger and his followers. Can the heroes stop him? Or will freedom become a word no longer associated with Freedom City?

Hate is a Four-Letter Word is an adventure for the *Mutants & Masterminds* roleplaying game. It is intended for a group of four to six power level 10 heroes, although the Gamemaster can scale the adventure to make it suitable for higher or lower level heroes by increasing or decreasing the power levels of the challenges as appropriate.

The adventure is set in Freedom City (described in the second edition of the *Freedom City* campaign sourcebook available from Green Ronin Publishing). Although Freedom City is recommended for running this adventure, it is not required. All the necessary material is included here and in the *Mutants & Masterminds* core rulebook.

Text presented in boxes such as this one is for the Gamemaster to read aloud to the players to introduce a particular scene or element of the adventure. Feel free to paraphrase or modify the introductory text as best suits the game you're running.

Players intending to play in this adventure should read no further. The rest of the text is for the *Gamemaster only*!

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Professor Marko Worth is a hate-monger who spreads his ideas like a disease across America, infecting the citizens of larger cities and gathering followers whenever and wherever he can. He's decided to make Freedom City an example of his power and gathered his disciples for a March of Hate around City Center, gleefully spreading his message to all who listen.

Mayor O'Connor has asked the heroes to help contain the situation for the extent of Worth's visit. It won't be easy: not only do the heroes have to deal with Professor Worth and his followers, but with the White Knight, who's a fan of the Professor's ideas.

SCENE ONE: BANKING ON IT

It's a warm, spring weekend in Freedom City. The trees have begun to bud, grass is regaining its emerald hue and many citizens have traded their weather-battered cars for bicycles. But even on days like this, crime doesn't take a vacation.

If any of the heroes have access to a police band radio, read the following:

In a squawking voice, you hear: "Unit Five ... we have a break-in at CDE National over on Madison. Please respond to the alarm and report in, over."

"This is Unit Five," responds a male voice. "We are en route, over."

In the distance, you hear the scream of a police siren. What do you do?

If any of the heroes don't have access to a radio, with a successful Notice check (DC 11), read the following:

Your day is interrupted by the squeal of tires and the familiar cry of a police siren. From the sound of it, the car may be heading towards Midtown. What do you do?

If they respond to the break-in, they come onto the scene right as a small band of thugs overpower the cops and jump in their squad car.

You arrive at the CDE National Bank right in time to see five men, all dressed in jeans and jackets with various horror-movie masks on, jump into a police squad car and peel down the street. There's an officer wounded on the street and another lying by the entrance.

The heroes have two choices at this point, they may check on the officers that are down or chase after the stolen squad car. If the heroes decide to pursue the car, use the stats for a police cruiser on page 143 of *M&M*. Once the car's disabled, the thugs attempt to scatter, hoping to group up later and split the loot. For the thugs' stats, use the Thug archetype on page 229 of *M&M*.

Any heroes staying behind to check on the downed officers notice the wounded officer has taken a gunshot to his left leg, while the unconscious one seems to have taken a blow to the head. If any of the heroes have the Medicine skill or the Healing power, they may attempt to treat them. Otherwise, one of the bank workers calls an ambulance onto the scene. After the heroes have captured the thugs and tended to the other officers, another officer approaches them.

As you finish reporting what you saw, another officer approaches you and says, "We're lucky you folks showed up... thanks. Oh, by the way, Mayor O'Connor is looking for you. The police department was asked to let you know he'd like to speak with you at City Hall."

SCENE TWO: ADMINISTERING A REQUEST

You enter the Mayor's office and are greeted by his secretary, who informs you the Mayor has been expecting you. Mayor O'Connor is in his office, on the phone. He nods in your direction and motions towards a few chairs for anyone who wants to sit.

"That's right," he says to the person on the phone. "I understand, but is there any way we can limit the route to a shorter distance? I see. Well, we'll see what we can do." With that, he shakes his head and hangs up the phone, looking towards you as he does.

"Thanks for coming so soon... I appreciate it. Freedom City needs you.

"Professor Marko Worth is a professor of psychology and sociology known as a hate-monger for his "theories" on racial and cultural superiority. His appearances are usually bereft of any tolerance and filled with a wide scope of prejudices. Since he's started to gain attention in the media and on the Internet, he's begun gathering a following of people he calls "The Worthy", fanatically devoted to his beliefs.

"It seems Professor Worth is coming to town tomorrow to have some kind of march supporting his divisive beliefs. I want to make sure it doesn't become violent. That's where you come in... I need to make sure someone doesn't make a martyr out of this guy, and that his followers stay exactly within the letter of the law, so I'd like you to help keep an eye on things."

If the heroes have questions, Mayor O'Connor answers to the best of his ability. If asked why the Mayor's letting him perform the march in the first place, O'Connor says:

"Honestly, if I had my way, I'd tell Worth exactly where he could put his "theories" and his so-called following. But it's a free country and I support the right for him to speak his mind and for his people to assemble peacefully, no matter how much I disagree with his message. The important thing is to ensure it stays peaceful."

If anyone declines the offer, O'Connor gets a sour look on his face and says:

"I see. Well, hopefully Freedom City's finest will be able to handle this on their own. I appreciate your time, good day."

He then ushers them out of his office with excuses of being "busy" or having some "meetings". Upon their exit, O'Connor attempts to get other local heroes to help and the player characters may hear about events in later scenes on the news (and choose to help out, if they wish).

If the heroes accept the Mayor's offer, he smiles and says:

"Excellent. Both the city and I appreciate this. The march is supposed to start around 10 AM tomorrow morning. If it's possible, try and be here before it starts. Again, I appreciate your help."

O'Connor's phone then rings and he politely excuses himself, letting the heroes find their way out. They may then do what they need to prepare for the next day.

SCENE THREE: HATE COMES TO TOWN

The next morning, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You arrive at City Hall in time to see a short, portly man in a power suit exit a limousine. He looks at you through his glasses and smirks a bit before walking up the steps of the building. Behind the limo is a pair of stretched vans filled with people. On the side of the van it says, "Are You Worthy?" in red lettering. Surrounding City Hall are several protestors with a variety of signs that include messages like "He's Not Worth It!" and "This is Freedom City, not Hate City!" Along with the protestors are contingents of Freedom City's finest, attempting to calm and contain the growing crowd. A police officer approaches the heroes and introduces himself as Lieutenant Hal Taylor. He explains that he's the officer assigned to the march's escort and is glad the heroes are there as back up.

Lt. Taylor will answer questions for a few minutes, and then excuses himself saying he has to coordinate with his men. After about 20 minutes, the portly man comes out with Mayor O'Connor. As the duo approaches the heroes, read the following:

The Mayor calls you over and says, "Good morning ... this is Professor Marko Worth; Professor Worth, these are the heroes that have joined your escort. They are some of the finest Freedom City has to offer."
"Good to know, Mr. Mayor," Worth says with a grin. "But I have my own ... protection. It's nice that your Mayor has accepted our offer, freedom of speech is so underrated these days, wouldn't you agree?"

With that, Worth returns to his limo as the crowd's mood gets worse, throwing beverages and garbage at the car as it pulls from the curb. The heroes have a few minutes before the march starts, so they should have time to come up with any strategy they may need.

If the heroes request info on the march from one of the officers, they will be told the path is near City Center, starting on Madison, then to 28th Ave, on to Foster and onto 4th Ave (see the map on page 26 of *Freedom City*). The march follows the route twice, with Worth riding in a Cadillac convertible surrounded by his followers the whole time and followed by one of his vans. The officer explains that the escort is to drive in front and behind the Professor, but is not allowed to drive beside it and imagines the heroes may have the same limitations (of course that may not stop some heroes). There are several buildings in the area, as well as quite a crowd gathering to see the show, though most seem to have arrived irate.

SCENE FOUR: HATE ON PARADE

As the march begins, there are several events that could happen. Feel free to use any of the following encounters, as well as any of your own, in this scene.

ANY PRESS IS GOOD PRESS

As the heroes escort the precession along Foster, they begin to hear (Notice, DC 10) many of the audience begin to boo them. Read the following to the players:

As you're traveling along Foster, you begin to hear distinctive "Boos" coming from the crowd. Though you've been hearing many words targeted at Worth, these are directed at you! Within the crowd, you begin catching phrases like "You should be fighting for Freedom... Not Hate!" and "Freedom City loves its heroes, not its sellouts!"

How the heroes handle this is up to them, but the solution should be tactful and not incite a riot. You should remind them the mayor is depending on them to keep things in order.

As a variant, perhaps some of the Worthy are playing the crowd and have convinced them the heroes have joined Worth's cause. Or perhaps it's Worth himself, using his powers to goad the crowd further. In any event, the heroes should handle the crowd diplomatically, if possible.

LOOTERS

In the confusion of the march, some of the local thugs have decided to try and loot a few stores nearby, using the commotion outside as cover. If the heroes Notice the thieves (DC 16), they may attempt to stop them and contain some of the chaos. Use the Thug archetype on page 229 of *M&M*. An interesting twist is to have the thugs be the same as the

ones in **Scene One**. Perhaps they managed to get out of jail and are up to no good again, or they're working with a faction to distract the heroes so someone can get to Worth. Alternately, they might be working for Worth, using the march as cover for their crimes.

SNIPER!

Professor Worth has made many enemies over the years, and one of them has decided his Freedom City tour is a perfect chance to exact some revenge. While the car crosses onto Foster, the heroes may Notice (DC 17) a slight glimmer from atop of one of the buildings, or perhaps they're doing a Search (DC 15) for anything out of the ordinary. Upon investigating, they'll find a solitary sniper poised on a rooftop and targeting the Professor. Will the heroes stop the sniper? For the sniper's stats use the Assassin archetype on page 226 of *M&M*.

Perhaps the sniper is just an ordinary person driven to the brink. In this case, the heroes may opt to use Diplomacy rather than brute strength to resolve the encounter. If this option is chosen, use either the Bystander or the Solider archetypes from the *M&M* rulebook. If the heroes need more of a challenge, perhaps Orion the Hunter (see page 152 of *Freedom City*) has been hired to take out Worth. Now, the heroes have to not only protect a hate-monger like Worth, but fight one of the deadliest assassins in the world to do it.

AND THE CROWD GOES WILD...

During the march, Worth decides to test the heroes. The Professor uses his Emotion Control to begin a riot initially targeted at him, but, in reality, aimed at the heroes (especially the ones publicly in opposition to his ideas). The heroes must now defend not only Worth, but themselves as well. For members of the crowd, use the Bystander archetype (*M&M*, page 226). If you'd like tougher opposition, feel free to mix in any of the other NPC archetypes in the **Supporting Characters** section of **Chapter 11** of the rulebook.

For a variation on this, perhaps Worth takes hold of one of the heroes and causes them to rebel against their teammates. In this instance, the heroes have to take on one of their own and figure out quickly what's causing them to act strangely. If there are any heroes in the group with Mental Awareness, they may notice the power emanates from Worth himself with a DC 20 Notice check.

A VOLUNTEER FROM THE AUDIENCE

The Professor's Worthy have come into conflict with part of the crowd, the two sides yelling insults at each other as things seem likely to turn violent. The heroes have to contain the potential powder keg by making an interaction skill check (DC 16) to get things under control.

Alternately, perhaps someone from the crowd runs out and attacks some of the Worthy. In conjunction with "The Crowd Goes Wild", perhaps the attackers are under Worth's influence and only serve as a precursor of what's to come.

SCENE FIVE: ENTER THE WHITE KNIGHT

As the march almost completes its second run and rounds onto 4th, read the following to the players:

The convoy is almost at the end of its second pass when you notice a large group of people standing in the street. The group is made up of a variety of people, all wearing a white shirt with the word hate in a crossed circle. Each person is holding hands and has formed a "human wall" in front of the street.

As the car approaches, it comes to a slow stop and Worth hops down into his car, sliding the sunroof shut. The bus pulls up alongside the car and stops, opening its door with a quiet "shush". That's when you see a man of impressive build walk out from the bus. He's wearing a pair of faded jeans, combat boots, a white tunic with a red, cross-like design and white hood, which carries on the cross pattern. He looks to the crowd as bluish-white flames flicker around him, his blue eyes shimmering a cold stare.

The White Knight has entered the fray. His intention is to clear the wall of people before him, but he's also not averse to taking down any of the heroes attempting to stop him. In the ensuing battle, White Knight uses bully tactics, using his Blast to take out any masses of heroes or dazzling someone who looks a powerful and then sucker-punching them.

During the battle, if it seems like White Knight is losing the battle, Worth will begin to use his emotion control to manipulate some of the crowd, hoping to give "his" knight an edge, as well as having the Worthy attack any heroes or police officers in the vicinity. At this point, if any heroes can detect Worth's powers, they may be able to stop him directly, especially if they can think of a way to prove that he's using his abilities. Some ideas the heroes may try include a power stunt to make the Professor's powers visible, allowing others to see, or finding a way to make someone in command "see" what's happening.

In any event, the battle should be challenging, but not overwhelming. In many instances, they may be faced with a person that's not responsible for their actions and should act accordingly.

AFTERMATH: HOME OF THE FREE

When the heroes finally defeat White Knight and get the crowd under control, they have a good chance of exposing Worth for what he is (even without knowledge of his abilities), which could lead to his arrest. Mayor O'Connor congratulates the heroes on a job well done and speaks highly of them to the press, which will, in turn, applaud the heroes' acts, especially if the crowd was relatively unscathed.

VARIANTS

Heroes didn't do what you thought they might? Need some additional ideas? Here are a few variations and options you can use to modify the adventure.

The Heroes Lose: If the heroes are taken down by the combined might of White Knight and Professor Worth, they'll be trumpeted around town as Worth's trophies. He'll then unveil the next phase of his plan, extending his influence and turning Freedom City into a bastion of his twisted ideals. The heroes will have to find a means to escape so they may save their city, even if the whole city hates them.

A Hero Turned: If you need additional foes, the easiest option is to place some Freedom City heroes under Worth's influence. The Next-Gen make good choices; they could either be "working" for Worth openly or using disguises and different code-names to hide their true identities until the heroes figure things out. If they don't before pounding some of the hapless kids into the pavement, things could get tricky.

VILLAINS

The White Knight is described on page 225 of *Freedom City*. He's a hate-mongering super-criminal right up Professor Worth's alley, and makes an idea dupe for the manipulative mastermind.

WHITE KNIGHT

Power Level: 11

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+8	+1	+3	+0	+1	+2
26/16	13	16	10	13	14
TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE		REFLEX	WILL	
+12	+7		+4	+8	

Skills: Intimidate 8 (+10), Notice 4 (+5), Sense Motive 6 (+7), Survival 6 (+7)

Feats: All-out Attack, Attack Specialization (blast), Minions 6 (up to 25 thugs, *M&M*, page 229), Power Attack, Sneak Attack

Powers: Enhanced Strength 10, Fire Control 11 (Alternate Powers: **Blast** 7 [Area Burst], **Dazzle** 11 [visual]), **Flight** 4 (100 MPH), **Protection** 9, **Strike** 11 (fire, Aura), **Super-Strength** 4 (heavy load: 6 tons)

Combat: Attack +8 (normal), +10 (blast), Grapple +21, Damage +8 (unarmed), +11 (blast), Defense +10, Knockback -6, Initiative +1

Abilities 22 + Skills 6 (24 ranks) + Feats 10 + Powers 81 + Combat 36 + Saves 14 = Total 169

PROFESSOR MARKO WORTH

Real Name: Marko Worth

Identity: Public

Occupation: College Professor, celebrity speaker

Base of Operations: Mobile

Affiliation: Leader of the Worthy

Height: 5'7"

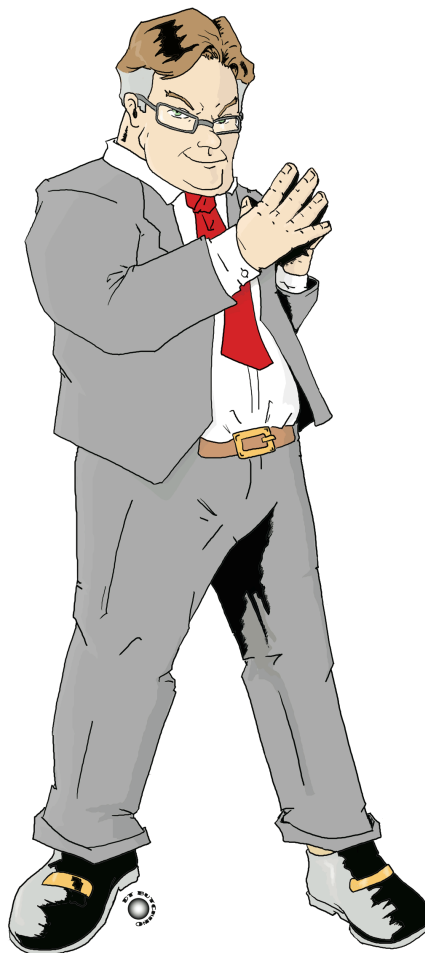
Weight: 242 lbs.

Eyes: Green

Hair: Brown (with some gray)

Marko Worth was just a crackpot college professor up until a few years ago. After driving home from a hate rally, he got into a car wreck. Suffering severe head trauma, he was rushed into the local hospital. During the operation to save his life, the surgeon made a slight error, unlocking something within Worth's brain that granted him mental powers.

Upon waking up in the hospital, Professor Worth found he could control the hate of other people, inciting a riot on his floor. Addicted to the rush of control he began using his newfound ability to climb the ladder of success, using various people and gathering followers he called his "Worthy". These days, Worth tours the country, recruiting people into his group and extending his influence to feed his twisted need for control.



PROFESSOR WORTH

Power Level: 9

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+0	+1	+3	+4	+4
10	11	12	16	18	19
TOUGHNESS	FORTITUDE	REFLEX	WILL		
+2	+2	+2	+7/+11*		

*With Mind Shield bonus

Skills: Bluff 6 (+10), Concentration 6 (+10), Diplomacy 6 (+10), Gather Information 3 (+7), Knowledge (civics) 3 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 5 (+8), Knowledge (tactics) 5 (+8), Medicine 3 (+6), Notice 2 (+6), Search 3 (+7), Sense Motive 6 (+10)

Feats: Assessment, Connected, Distract (Bluff) 2, Fascinate (Bluff) 2, Inspire, Leadership, Master Plan, Minions 8 (the Worthy, cultists, *M&M*, page 226), Second Chance (Bluff)

Powers: Emotion Control 9 (Cone Area, Limited to Hate), Mind Shield 3

Combat: Attack +3, Grapple +3, Damage +0 (unarmed), Defense +6, Initiative +0

Abilities 26 + Skills 12 (48 ranks) + Feats 19 + Powers 21 + Combat 18 + Saves 7 = 103

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