

LINDA LEWIS GRIFFITH JANUARY 2, 2017 1:51 PM

# Here's what you can do to help stop hate crimes



BY LINDA LEWIS GRIFFITH  
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Hate crimes are on the rise.

According to the latest FBI report, anti-Muslim crimes in the United States rose 67 percent between 2014 and 2015. The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that 892 hate groups are actively operating in this country.

In December, the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education responded to inappropriate, postelection student comments by issuing a zero-tolerance policy for behavior deemed harassing or hateful.

Hate crimes also are increasingly violent. The Bureau of Justice Statistics' February 2014 report shows that the percentage of hate crimes involving violence rose from 78 percent in 2004 to 90 percent in 2011 and 2012.

The BJS states that 61 percent of hate crimes are racially motivated, 14 percent target religion, 13 percent focus on sexual orientation and 11 percent attack ethnicity.

It classifies the hate crimes into four categories: Thrill-seekers are motivated by excitement and account for two-thirds of all hate crimes. Defenders see themselves as protecting their neighborhoods; they commit one quarter of all hate crimes. Retaliators seek to avenge a perceived slight and make up 8 percent. The final 1 percent are on a mission and have made bigotry a career.

Hate crimes are particularly devastating to their victims.

In a paper titled "Hate Crimes Hurt More," Paul Iganski cited the fact that hate crimes target victims because of factors they can't change, such as ethnicity or religion. Terror spreads from individuals to entire communities. Perpetrators frequently resort to excessive violence, far more than is needed to subdue the victim. And offenses are often committed by gangs.

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## HOW TO STOP HATE CRIMES

- **Act. Do something.** Your apathy is interpreted as acceptance by the haters, the public and the victim.
- **Unite.** Call a friend or co-worker. Organize allies from churches, schools, clubs and other civic sources. Create a diverse coalition that includes children, police and the news media.
- **Support the victim.** Hate crime victims are especially vulnerable, fearful and alone. Reach out to them following an incident. Let them know you care.
- **Report.** If you are a victim of a hate crime, report every incident and ask for help.
- **Do your homework.** Determine if a particular incident was the work of a hate group. If so, research its symbols and agenda. Seek advice from anti-hate organizations. Share your information with the community.
- **Create an alternative.** NEVER attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for anger and frustration. Hold a unity rally or parade. Create a "hate-free zone."
- **Speak up.** You have First Amendment rights. Denounce hate crimes by taking out an ad, writing an article or giving a talk. Build an anti-hate website or post an anti-hate blog.
- **Lobby leaders.** Pursue politicians, business and community leaders to stand up against hate.
- **Teach tolerance.** Talk to your children about diversity. Read books with them. Discuss current events. Sponsor an "I have a dream" contest.
- **Reach out.** Dialogue with people of different viewpoints and faiths. Listen to their opinions carefully and without judgment.

Source: Adapted from The Southern Poverty Law Center



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