



Department of Justice

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HATE CRIMES: U.S. ATTORNEY, FBI TO HOST CONFERENCE

First Such Meeting in the Country With Law Enforcement, Community Groups

ATLANTA, GA – Members of community groups will join officers from local, state and federal law enforcement agencies this coming Tuesday, May 18, at Georgia State University to discuss implementing and enforcing the new federal hate crimes statute. The conference, the first of its kind in the country, will be hosted by United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates and Brian D. Lamkin, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Atlanta Division. This event is partially open to the media and all media are invited to attend this summit, which specifically addresses the "Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act," which was signed into law by President Obama on October 18, 2009. According to the Justice Department in Washington D.C., the conference in Atlanta is not only the first to bring together law enforcement, prosecutors and affected community groups, but is expected to serve as a model for the rest of the country to educate and sensitize those who have a critical stake in the new law.

In announcing the conference, United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said, "We are committed to aggressively enforcing the Hate Crimes Act which protects citizens from violent acts of intolerance. This legislation is particularly important here in Georgia since there is no comprehensive state hate crimes statute."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge Brian Lamkin added, "During our conference, we will share important information about investigating, prosecuting and preventing hate crimes with representatives of Georgia law enforcement agencies and community organizations. There also will be an opportunity for participants to meet one another and to exchange ideas regarding the implementation of the law."

"The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act is essential because, sadly, hate crimes and the intolerance that breeds them remain all too prevalent in our nation. We look forward to working with law enforcement in Georgia to educate communities about the new law and prevent hate crimes from occurring in the first place," said Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division in Washington, D.C.

This new civil rights law makes it a federal crime to willfully cause or attempt to cause bodily injury to another person with any dangerous weapon because of (1) the person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin; or (2) the person's actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability if the crime affected interstate or foreign commerce or occurred within federal jurisdiction.

The conference will include special guest speaker Dave O'Malley, retired Chief of the Laramie (Wyoming) Police Department. O'Malley was a commander in the Laramie Police Department on October 6, 1998 – the day University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard was lured from a Laramie bar by two men pretending to be gay, driven to a remote area, tied to a fence, beaten and pistol whipped. He was found comatose and died six days later. The perpetrators admitted that they sought out Shepard and beat him because he was gay. After Shepard's murder, O'Malley, who has said he is ashamed of his former attitudes toward gay people, became an outspoken proponent of the new federal hate crimes law.

The new law carries Shepard's name as well as the name of James Byrd, Jr. Byrd, an African American, was also murdered in 1998 when three men in Jasper, Texas, wrapped a chain around his ankles, hooked the chain to a pickup truck and then dragged him for miles over rural roads outside of Jasper. Byrd was targeted by his killers because of his race.

The conference in Atlanta will also include a panel discussion devoted to fostering cooperation between non-governmental organizations and law enforcement. Panelists include Cheryl Courtney-Evans, Founder and Executive Director of TILTT, Inc. (Transgender Individuals Living Their Truth); Revered Paul Graetz, Senior Pastor of First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta; Elaine Levine, representing Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights; Dr. Jenny Manders, Disability Studies Coordinator at the University of Georgia; Melinda Morgan, Operations Director of Georgia Equality, Inc.; Brenda Muhammad, Director of the Atlanta Victim Assistance, Inc., Bill Nigut, Southeast Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League; and Salim Shermohammed, representing the Ismaili Council for the Southeastern United States. Police and other law enforcement officers from many jurisdictions are expected to attend the conference.

Ms. Yates added, "We believe that this community conference will be a worthwhile first step in our efforts to ensure that we zealously protect the rights of citizens in Georgia who are victims of violent hate crimes."

For further information please contact Sally Quillian Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The

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