

U.S. Attorney's Report to the District

Prosecuting Hate Crimes

Prosecuting hate crimes is one of the highest priorities of our office and the U.S. Department of Justice, of which we are a part. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, news reports of hate-fueled incidents perpetrated across the country against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders seem to be an almost daily occurrence. These are abhorrent. Regrettably, bias-motivated activities are also directed at members of many other groups based on religion, race, national origin, sexual orientation, and other protected factors. Hate crimes and hate incidents don't just affect the individual victim targeted, they affect the community as a whole because the perpetrator's message is that anyone in the same group does not belong and should expect the same or worse treatment in the future.

As U.S. Attorney General Merrick B. Garland recently stated, "All people in this country should be able to live without fear of being attacked or harassed because of where they are from, what they look like, whom they love, or how they worship." Shortly after being sworn in, Attorney General Garland ordered a review of whether the Department of Justice was making the best use of its available tools to combat hate crimes. That review was recently completed, and the Department is implementing measures to ensure its efforts are as effective as possible in addressing the problem.

In the Eastern District of California, our office has a strong record of prosecuting hate crimes, including arsons directed at houses of worship, a cross burning, and attacks on individuals. Whenever a suspected hate crime occurs, we work closely with the FBI and the local district attorney and police to determine whether a case is provable and, if so, which forum—federal court or state court—is the best venue for prosecution. The vigorous prosecution of hate crimes is an essential part of society's response to such acts, showing that they will not be tolerated and that justice will be upheld by holding perpetrators accountable.

In addition to prosecuting hate crimes cases, our office is committed to supporting the diverse communities that make up the Eastern District and engaging with them in the fight against hate. Since the late 1990s, we have led the Greater Sacramento Area Hate Crimes Task Force, which brings community leaders and local and federal law enforcement representatives together in a joint effort to combat and respond effectively to hate crimes. Recently, we converted our office's Fresno community outreach group into a Greater Fresno Area Hate Crimes Task Force for the same purpose, following Sacramento's successful model. Just last month we convened each task force in virtual sessions to discuss events that had occurred and the law enforcement and community response. To respond to the rise in anti-AAPI hate crimes and hate incidents, we have met with many AAPI community leaders and groups, provided hate crimes training, and released Public Service Announcements encouraging the community to report hate crimes. We also recently reestablished our office's Civil Rights/Hate Crimes/Human Trafficking Working Group under the leadership of one of our senior attorney managers to

coordinate and focus our efforts in these areas that involve some of our cases' most vulnerable victims.

We also continue to conduct extensive outreach to the community by meeting with community leaders and organizations across the district. While the pandemic has moved our recent community outreach activity online, it hasn't slowed us in the least. During this time, we have been meeting with African American leaders including NAACP chapters, AAPI leaders and organizations, LGBTQ+ organizations, faith-based organizations, interfaith groups, and others, just as before. These meetings connect us to the communities we serve, help us understand their concerns, and give us an opportunity to encourage the reporting of hate crimes and other offenses that victimize their members. We place special emphasis on outreach to younger people as we participate in civics education programs, mentoring opportunities, and public interest career panels, including presenting our home-grown Future Assistant United States Attorney Academy to introduce students to the work we do. All these efforts serve to bring us closer to the community we serve, which makes us more effective in doing our jobs.

If you have been victimized by a hate crime or hate incident, know someone who has, or witness a hate crime or hate incident, I encourage you to report it to as soon as you can to the police (call 9-1-1 if it is an emergency) and the FBI at 1-800-CALL-FBI, which offers interpretation in multiple languages. We and our state and local law enforcement partners can investigate and prosecute only those hate crimes that we learn about, and even if a hate-motivated incident doesn't rise to the level of a crime, reporting gives all of us a fuller picture of the danger our community faces from such incidents. Your act of courage in reporting hate crimes or hate incidents can help protect the community and stop the spread of hate.

If you would like to communicate with our office, please contact the main number in Sacramento, or submit a suggestion by clicking on the button below. Thank you.

Acting United States Attorney

Phillip A. Talbert