

eliminating racism empowering women

ywca

Hate Crimes

Hate Crimes are crimes committed against individuals as a result of personal characteristics of the victims such as race, color, national origin, gender, and or sexual orientation. These crimes fray the fabric of society because though an act of crime may target an individual person, the result is that they invoke fear among many in a community.

Both the United States Government and states have enacted laws to address hate crimes. Across the country, laws addressing hate crimes vary from state to state. However, among the 45 states that address hate crimes, most address crimes that are related to one or more of the following: a victim's race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

On the federal level, the 1968 federal hate crimes law permits the federal prosecution of a hate crime only if the crime was motivated by bias based on race, color, national origin and the person committing the crime intended to prevent the victim from exercising a "federally protected right" such as the right to vote or attend school. Because the crime has to meet both requirements, these requisites substantially limit the likelihood of federal prosecution of hate crimes even when the crime is particularly heinous.

VIEW POINTS

Advocates for hate crimes legislation argue that there is strong public support for preventing and ending hate crimes. Advocates point out that a majority of states already have enacted some form of hate crime legislation and that passage of the federal hate crimes law was a bipartisan effort. Advocates also argue that there is widespread support for federal hate crimes legislation among law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations, including Attorneys General for 22 states, the National Sheriffs' Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Opponents of hate crimes legislation argue that all crimes should be treated the same regardless of motive. Opponents maintain that special legislation is not needed to address crimes that are motivated by a victim's sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability.

YWCA POSITION

The YWCA supports the passage of Hate Crimes legislation that protects people from harassment, violence and other crimes on the basis of race, sex, gender, religion, ethnicity, age, disability, or sexual orientation.