

Criminal Justice Data Brief

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Mark J. Bennett, Attorney General
Lisa M. Ginoza, First Deputy Attorney General

Lari Koga, Administrator
March 2007

Hate Crimes in Hawaii, 2006

Prepared by
Paul Perrone, Chief of Research & Statistics

Hawaii Revised Statutes §846-51 through §846-54 require the Department of the Attorney General to develop, direct, and report annually on a statewide hate crime statistics reporting program. With input and assistance from Hawaii's county prosecuting attorneys and police departments, the program was launched on January 1, 2002.

This fifth annual report covers hate crime cases that reached a final disposition during Calendar Year 2006. Six such cases were reported to the program; details appear on page 3. Five-year summary statistics are also included in this edition.

Definition and Background

Similar to the federal definition, the term "hate crime" is legally defined in Hawaii as "any criminal act in which the perpetrator intentionally selected a victim, or in the case of a property crime, the property that was the object of a crime, because of hostility toward the actual or perceived race, religion, disability, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation of any person" (HRS §846-51). "Gender identity or expression" was added in Hawaii in 2003, but is not included at the federal level.

It is important to note that hate crimes are not new types of offenses, but rather are traditional offenses (e.g., assault, vandalism) for which an offender's intent is at least partially based upon a bias against one or more of the protected groups. However, they differ from most traditional offenses in the frequently complicated process of determining whether or not a hate crime has, in fact, occurred. While two heinous and highly publicized hate crimes that occurred nationally in 1998¹ offer clear-cut examples, far more common are thousands of comparatively lesser offenses that exhibit at least one hate crime characteristic (see next

section), but where it is difficult to determine the true motive and intent of the offenders. One of the challenges in these otherwise routine cases is in having sufficient investigative resources to definitively answer not only the standard question that the criminal justice system is designed to address, i.e., "Who did what to whom?" but also, "What were the offender's thoughts, biases, and motives – what was in his or her heart and mind at the time?"

The use of the term "intentionally" in Hawaii's hate crime definition adds further complication, as there are specific legal standards that must be met in order to establish criminal intent.

Hate Crime Characteristics

The FBI's national program emphasizes a list of fourteen characteristics that should be considered when determining whether or not an offense is a hate crime (CJIS, 1999). These same characteristics are also utilized in the Hawaii program. A critical concept concerning these characteristics is that they are not stringent criteria, *per se* – there is no requirement as to certain key characteristics or the minimum number of characteristics that must be present in order for an offense to be determined a hate crime.

1. The offender and victim are of a different race, religion, disability, ethnicity/national origin, or sexual orientation (hereafter "group").
2. Bias-related oral comments, written statements, or gestures were made by the offender.
3. Bias-related drawings, markings, symbols, or graffiti were left at the crime scene.
4. Certain objects, items, or things which indicate bias were used.
5. The victim is a member of a group which is overwhelmingly outnumbered by other residents in the community where the crime took place.

¹ The truck-dragging murder of James Byrd, Jr. in Texas in June, and the fatal beating of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming in October.

6. The crime occurred in an area where other hate crimes against the victim's group have occurred, and where tensions remain high against this group.
7. Several incidents occurred in the same locality, at or about the same time, and the victims were all of the same group.
8. A substantial portion of the community where the crime occurred perceives that the incident was motivated by bias.
9. The victim was engaged in activities promoting his/her group.
10. The incident coincided with a holiday or a date of particular significance to the victim's group.
11. The offender was previously involved in a similar hate crime or is a member of a hate group.
12. There are indications that a hate group was involved.
13. A historically established animosity exists between the victim's and the offender's groups.
14. The victim, although not a member of the targeted group, was a member of an advocacy group supporting the precepts of the victim group.

Hate Crime Statistics Reporting in Hawaii

Given a need for the most complete and accurate information, as well as the legal requirement to establish intent, Hawaii's hate crime statistics reporting program is set at the prosecution level. This avoids the pitfall that has occurred in many jurisdictions where the police report hate crime statistics. Specifically, the police are not able to investigate the interpersonal dynamics involved in a large number of relatively less serious offenses that exhibit at least one hate crime characteristic (especially as the overwhelming majority of these cases would *not* ultimately be determined to be hate crimes), particularly when an offender is not arrested or when the "suspected hate crime" aspects are ambiguous.²

² Although most "possible hate crimes" (i.e., cases that exhibit at least one of the 14 characteristics) are not genuine hate crimes, they must be initially treated as such. Even seemingly obvious hate crimes may be invalidated upon thorough investigation. To illustrate the complexity of determining the motivation behind possible hate crimes, the FBI makes reference to a case in which a synagogue was vandalized and defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti. After an arrest was made and all of the facts surrounding the case emerged, the incident was

By placing the point of data collection at the prosecution level, Hawaii's program avoids false positives, utilizes limited police resources much more efficiently, and is based on incidents that clearly meet the State's legal definition of hate crimes, i.e., criminal acts for which the intent of the perpetrator(s) is determined to be derived from hostility toward one or more of the protected groups. It also provides the ability to conduct statistical inquiries into case processing and outcomes, which yields important data that are generally not included in other jurisdictions' hate crime reporting.

The prosecutors' ability to make determinations of the intent behind possible hate crimes is dependent upon receiving good preliminary information from the police. In the Hawaii program, it is the police departments' responsibility to ensure that "suspected hate crime" information, when applicable, is clearly and consistently included in the narrative section of their incident report forms.

At the request of this Department, the FBI provided hate crime recognition training to Hawaii's police departments on several occasions during the latter half of the 1990s, and conducted specialized training sessions for prosecutors in early 2002. The police also include a hate crime module in their training programs for officer recruits.

The Hawaii program's data elements generally parallel those utilized in the FBI's program (CJIS, 1999). It was necessary to modify some of the data elements in order to more appropriately reflect the uniqueness of Hawaii (e.g., "beach or beach park" was added as a location code). In addition, the Hawaii program collects data on charge descriptions and dispositions. A completed hate crime report is due to the program no later than the last business day of the month following one in which a case either concludes the sentencing phase (for convictions) or reaches its final disposition (for non-convictions). Although Hawaii law does not provide for enhanced sanctions against perpetrators of misdemeanor-level hate crimes, these offenses must still be reported for statistical purposes.

Similar to the FBI's quarterly summary report, an annual summary report form requiring the respective Prosecuting Attorney's (department head) signature is included in the Hawaii program. The annual summary provides the prosecutors' tally of hate crimes disposed and reported, and is primarily

determined to not be a hate crime, but rather an attempt by the rabbi's jilted mistress, who was herself a congregation member, to seek revenge against her former lover.

useful for verifying data received by the program earlier in the year.

Case Details for 2006

Six hate crime cases were reported to the Hawaii program in 2006, all of which occurred in the City & County of Honolulu. Enhanced hate crime sanctions were not sought in the one case that included felony charges (Case #3). Only Cases #4 and #5 seem to clearly fit the profile of a “classic” hate crime, whereby the offenders deliberately and without provocation targeted their victims based solely on their biases against the victims’ perceived characteristics (in these examples, race/ethnicity and religion). The remaining cases involved precipitating altercations and/or what appears may have been mentally impaired offenders with somewhat nebulous biases and intent. These four cases highlight the inherent subjectivity involved in making hate crime determinations, and could have just as legitimately been determined to *not* be hate crimes.

Case #1 involved a 45-year-old White male offender who approached the victim, a stranger, on a public sidewalk and shouted anti-White, anti-Black, anti-Jewish, and anti-homosexual epithets at the victim before repeatedly punching him, causing minor facial injuries. The offender pled guilty to a charge of Assault 3 and was sentenced to a short jail term followed by one year of probation. At the time of sentencing, the offender had three prior felony convictions (including one for Robbery 2) and seven prior convictions for less serious offenses.

Case #2 involved a 26-year-old White male offender who verbalized anti-Black epithets before attempting to punch the victim, who was shopping in a convenience store. The victim successfully blocked the punches but sustained a minor injury to his arm. The offender pled guilty to an Assault 3 charge and received a deferred acceptance of guilt. He did not have a prior criminal record at the time of the incident.

Case #3 was a high profile “neighborhood bully” case that involved a 39-year-old male of Filipino descent, who reportedly threatened and otherwise terrorized many of his neighbors over a period of several years. He was ultimately convicted on two counts of Terroristic Threatening 1 and was sentenced to a five-year prison term. Apart from making serious verbal threats to the victims’ lives and well-being, these two particular offenses featured the use of anti-White, anti-Japanese, and anti-homosexual epithets. At the

time of these incidents, the offender’s prior criminal record included two misdemeanor and two petty misdemeanor convictions, three of which involved interpersonal violence.

Case #4 involved a group of young adult males, including the offender, a 21-year-old of Hawaiian descent, who shouted anti-White epithets at a group of males who were walking on a sidewalk in Waikiki. The offender then attempted to kick and punch one of the victims, who successfully blocked the attacks but later complained of pain in his left arm. The offender, whose prior criminal record included two DUI convictions, was charged with harassment; the case was dismissed without prejudice.

Case #5 involved two servicemen stationed in Hawaii, who approached a group of three adult males exiting a downtown Honolulu bar and directed anti-Arab and anti-Muslim epithets at one member of the group. The offenders then assaulted all three victims, who sustained facial lacerations, cracked teeth, and contusions. The charges against the second offender were still pending at the close of 2006, but the first offender, a 20-year-old White male, was charged with two counts of Assault 3. He received a deferred acceptance of no contest and was ordered to pay restitution and submit to alcohol abuse and anger management assessments. At the time of the incident, this offender did not have a prior criminal record in Hawaii. Notably, the victim who was the primary target of the assault is neither an Arab nor a Muslim.

Case #6 arose from a traffic altercation involving a 49-year-old White male who was attempting to turn his pickup truck into a driveway in a business section of Honolulu, and two adult males who were “riding double” on a moped. An argument ensued, throughout which the truck driver directed anti-homosexual epithets at the moped riders. The moped riders left the scene but returned a few moments later and the argument began anew, culminating with the truck driver hitting the back of the moped passenger’s helmet, which caused the passenger’s face to impact the back of the moped driver’s helmet but did not result in significant injuries to either victim. The truck driver was charged with Assault 3 but pled guilty to a reduced charge of Harassment, and was sentenced to six months of probation. At the time of the incident, the truck driver had one prior felony conviction (for Assault 2) and five convictions for less serious offenses.

Five-Year Summary Statistics, 2002-2006

A total of 11 hate crime cases were reported to the Hawaii program during its first five years of operation (2002-2006), yielding an average of 2.2 cases reported statewide per year and 0.6 cases reported per participating agency per year. As such, data from Hawaii's proprietary hate crime statistics reporting program have been consistent with those from the FBI's national program, in that an average of less than one case per participating agency per year is typically reported. The following table provides statewide and county tallies of hate crime cases reported annually to Hawaii's program:

County	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Honolulu	2	1	1	0	6
Hawaii	0	0	0	1	0
Maui	0	0	0	0	0
Kauai	0	0	0	0	0
State Total	2	1	1	1	6

Due to multiple biases expressed in some cases, the 11 total hate crime cases identified above involved 18 total biases, as categorized and subcategorized below:

Bias Type Categories & Subcategories	# of Bias Type Instances	% of Total Bias Type Instances	% within Bias Type
Race/Ethnicity	12	66.7	
Anti-White	7	38.9	58.3
Anti-Black	2	11.1	16.7
Anti-Japanese	2	11.1	16.7
Anti-Arab	1	5.6	8.3
Sexual Orientation	4	22.2	
Anti-Homosexual	4	22.2	100.0
Religion	2	11.2	
Anti-Jewish	1	5.6	50.0
Anti-Muslim	1	5.6	50.0

Reference

Criminal Justice Information Services Division (October 1999). *Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines*. U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This report can be downloaded in PDF format from the Crime Prevention & Justice Assistance Division web site:

hawaii.gov/ag/cpja