



Feeding on the FEAR

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the base, holding up all the rest, is the culture. The commonly held beliefs and values of a society make possible the environment and structures to sustain and nurture institutional and individual violence.

The significance of this model is twofold. It helps us to think of examples of bias-motivated violence at various social levels, and it helps us to think about strategies for interventions. For example, a focus on the individual level encourages us to consider the psychodynamics of hate to explain bias-motivated violence such as gay bashing, discrimination against immigrants, or the burning of a Black church. At the institutional level, we are required to look at the social interaction of hate. Examples include churches labeling homosexuality as sinful or governmental bodies passing immigration laws that restrict access of immigrant children to health, education and welfare services, or even group behaviors in gangs, families, fraternities, and militias. At the cultural level, one must strive to understand the culture of hate in America. For example, one must recognize that violence is not a necessary response to problem solving, and we should place emphasis upon personal responsibility versus blaming others for one's situation. Finally, what this model does is to point out that, if we are not involved in seeking change at the various levels, we share in the culpability of violence at all levels.

What makes bias-motivated violence such a critical social problem is that it always affects more than the individual victim. The victim's skin color, ethnicity, or sexual orientation cannot be changed to avoid being "targeted." In addition to being a very personal offense, bias-motivated violence is a community offense. Gay bashing affects the entire gay community. An offense against a black person because of his or her color is an offense against all persons of color; furthermore, an offense against any person because of color is an offense against all persons. Unlike the person who was robbed or mugged, having been in the wrong place at the wrong

time, the hate victim is targeted because of whom one represents, a community toward which hate is directed.

Since bias-motivated violence, unlike other crimes or offenses, is both a personal offense and a social offense, it requires community as well as individual interventions. The challenge of developing effective interventions for bias-motivated violence is far reaching. Perpetrators as well as victims are in need of individual interventions. And, since bias-motivated violence never victimizes only the individual, community interventions must always be considered. At the institutional level, political action and advocacy is suggested. And finally, at the cultural level, the model suggests analysis of norms, values and interventions aimed at promoting strategies of peace, non-violence and mediation in the search for conflict resolutions. ▼

References

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