



April 16, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Dear Char Barker and member of the House Committee on Judiciary,

HB 3480 changes “crimes of intimidation,” to “Bias Crime”. This is a subtle but significant change in terminology. You will hear testimony from folks that will give you more specific data and personal accounts of the incidence and prevalence of these types of crimes, often referred to as “hate crimes”. The data will show that there is a continuation of “Bias Crime”. Attached is an article I wrote few years ago when I was the Director of the North West Center for the Study of Violence and Development, a project funded by the US Agency on International Development.

The project studied the violence aimed at ethnic minorities. We learned the extent of which violent crimes committed are based solely on the victim’s ethnicity. I was surprised to learn through my research that Oregon and the North West was and continues to be a haven for hate groups. We also learned that the term “hate crime” was too limiting for a full investigation of the phenomenon. It was evident to us that the issue was confined to a legalistic term of “crime”. We decided that a better descriptor was the term “bias motivated violence”. This allowed us to consider a broader range of motive than just the ill define term “hate”. We considered a continuum of motivation from discomfort, to dislike, to the downright hatred of a person broadly categorized as belonging to an over-categorized group of people. Thus we can consider a range of intimidation aimed at an array of groups.

As an act of violence aimed at a group and not an individual, bias motivated violence takes on more severe consequences. For example, if a person is mugged outside the building and their wallet stolen, we can simply write that off as being in the wrong place at the wrong time. That person can rightfully feel victimized. However, if someone is mugged outside the building because of their ethnicity or sexual orientation this person is a victim for a reason they cannot change. The innocent person is a victim because of who they are. When this is the case, it is no longer just the victim, who has been harmed, but all those who now feel at risk because they identified with what motivated the violence; a whole community is victimized.

Bias crime reaches far into the minds of the victims. It touches their identity and causes trauma to its victims: Sleeplessness, depression, anxiety, paranoia, an inability to trust are symptoms of bias motivated violence. Victims of non-bias motivated violence do not experience the same symptoms.

As you can see, and as you will hear from those who follow me, this is a serious matter. It is one that requires our careful attention and clarifying our terminology will help to make our response and interventions to this problem more effective. This is the right step to make and we urge your support.

Thank you,



Representative Joseph Gallegos

