

TEN WAYS TO FIGHT HATE

Hate in America has become commonplace. Bias is a human condition, and American history is rife with prejudice against groups and individuals because of their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. As a nation, we've made a lot of progress, but stereotyping and unequal treatment persist.

When bias motivates an unlawful act, it is considered a hate crime. Most hate crimes are inspired by race and religion but hate today wears many faces. Bias incidents (eruptions of hate where no crime is committed) also tear communities apart and can escalate into actual crimes.

Since 2010, law enforcement agencies have reported an average of about 6,000 hate crime incidents per year to the FBI. But government studies show that the real number is far higher — an estimated 260,000 per year. Many hate crimes never get reported, in large part because the victims are reluctant to go to the police. In addition, many law enforcement agencies are not fully trained to recognize or investigate hate crimes, and many simply do not collect or report hate crime data to the FBI.

This guide sets out 10 principles for fighting hate in your community.

1. ACT: Do something. *Hate is an open attack on tolerance and acceptance.* It must be countered with acts of goodness. Sitting home with your virtue does no good. In the face of hate, silence is deadly. Apathy will be interpreted as acceptance — by the perpetrators, the public, and — worse — the victims. If left unchallenged, hate persists and grows.

Hate is an attack on a community's health. Hate tears society along racial, ethnic, gender, and religious lines. The U.S. Department of Justice warns that hate crimes, more than any other crime, can trigger community conflict, civil disturbances, and even riots. For all their “patriotic” rhetoric, hate groups and their imitators are really trying to divide us; their views are fundamentally anti-democratic. True patriots fight hate.

Hate escalates. Take seriously the smallest hint of hate — even what appears to be simple name-calling. The Department of Justice again has a warning: Slurs often escalate to harassment, harassment to threats, and threats to physical violence. Don't wait to fight hate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- »» Pick up the phone. Call friends and colleagues. Host a neighborhood or community meeting. Speak up in church. Suggest some action.
- »» Sign a petition. Attend a vigil. Lead a prayer.
- »» Repair acts of hate-fueled vandalism, as a neighborhood or a community.
- »» Use whatever skills and means you have. Offer your print shop to make fliers. Share your musical talents at a rally. Give your employees the after- noon off to attend.
- »» Be creative. Take action. Do your part to fight hate.

2. JOIN FORCES: Others share your desire to stand against hate. There is power in numbers. Asking for help and organizing a group reduces personal fear and vulnerability, spreads the workload, and increases creativity and impact. Coalitions can stand up to — and isolate — organized hate groups. You and your allies can help educate others as you work to eradicate hate.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- »» Call on groups that are likely to respond to a hate event, including faith alliances, labor unions, teachers, women's groups, university faculties, fair housing councils, the YMCA, and youth groups. Make a special effort to involve businesses, schools, houses of worship, politicians, children, and members of targeted groups.
- »» Also call on local law enforcement officials. Work to create a healthy relationship with local police; working together, human rights groups and law enforcement officials can track early warning signs of hate brewing in a community, allowing for a rapid and unified response.

3. SUPPORT THE VICTIMS: Hate crime victims are especially vulnerable. If you're a victim, report every incident — in detail — and ask for help. If you learn about a hate crime victim in your community, show support. Let victims know you care. Surround them with comfort and protection.

Victims of hate crimes often feel terribly alone and afraid. They have been attacked simply for being who they are — for their disability, their ethnicity, their sexual orientation. Silence amplifies their isolation; it also tacitly condones the act of hate. Victims need a strong, timely message that they are valued. Small acts of kindness — a phone call, a letter — can help.

4. SPEAK UP: Hate must be exposed and denounced. Help news organizations achieve balance and depth. Do not debate hate group members in conflict-driven forums. Instead, speak up in ways that draw attention away from hate, toward unity. Goodness has a First Amendment right, too. We urge you to denounce hate groups and hate crimes and to spread the truth about

hate's threat to a pluralistic society. An informed and unified community is the best defense against hate.

You can spread tolerance through social media and websites, church bulletins, door-to-door fliers, letters to the editor, and print advertisements. Hate shrivels under strong light.

5. EDUCATE YOURSELF: An informed campaign improves its effectiveness. Determine if a hate group is involved, and research its symbols and agenda. Eruptions of hate generally produce one of two reactions: apathy ("It's just an isolated act by some kooks") or fear. Before reacting, communities need accurate information about those who are spouting hate.

There are hundreds of active hate groups in the U.S. Most hate crimes, however, are not committed by members of hate groups; the Southern Poverty Law Center estimates fewer than 5 percent. Many hate crimes are committed by young males acting alone or in small groups, often for thrills. While these perpetrators may act independently, they are sometimes influenced by the dehumanizing rhetoric and propaganda of hate groups.

WHEN HATE COMES TO CHURCH: Dylann Roof was a troubled teenager in South Carolina who was indoctrinated into white supremacist ideology online. The radicalization process began when he searched for information about "black on white crime" after hearing about the case of a black teen, Trayvon Martin, who was killed by a neighborhood watchman in Florida. Roof landed on the web page of the Council of Conservative Citizens, a rabidly racist hate group descended from the old White Citizens Councils formed in the 1950s in the South. There, he found page after page of racist propaganda. Roof later wrote in an online manifesto that he has "never been the same since that day."

On June 17, 2015, Roof walked into the Emanuel A.M.E. Church in South Carolina, famous for its historic role in the civil rights movement, where a Bible study was under way. After about an hour of listening in the meeting, Roof pulled out a gun and said, "I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go." Then he began firing methodically, killing nine African Americans, including the church's pastor. He left one woman alive, he said, so she could tell the world what had happened. Roof has since become emblematic of a growing phenomenon: the "lone-wolf" terrorist who acts alone after being radicalized

6. CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE: Hate has a First Amendment right. Courts have routinely upheld the constitutional right of the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups to hold rallies and say whatever they want. Communities can restrict group movements to avoid conflicts with other citizens but hate rallies will continue. Your efforts should focus on channeling people away from hate.

DO NOT ATTEND A HATE RALLY: As much as you might like to physically show your opposition to hate, confrontations serve only the perpetrators. They also burden law enforcement with protecting hatemongers from otherwise law-abiding citizens.

Every act of hatred should be met with an act of love and unity. Many communities facing a hate group rally have held alternative events at the same hour, some distance away, emphasizing strength in community and diversity. These events give people a safe outlet for the frustration and anger they want to vent.

7. PRESSURE LEADERS: Too often, fear of negative publicity, a lack of partnerships with affected communities, and a failure to fully understand hate and bias can prevent leaders from stepping up, creating a vacuum in which rumors spread, victims feel ignored, and perpetrators find tacit acceptance.

The fight against hate needs community leaders willing to take an active role. The support of mayors, police chiefs, college presidents, school principals, local clergy, business leaders, and others can help your community address the root causes of hate and help turn bias incidents into experiences from which your community can learn and heal.

When leaders step forward and act swiftly in the wake of a hate incident, victims feel supported, community members feel safe, and space for action and dialogue can grow.

Here are steps for a healthy community:

- »» Form relationships with community leaders before a hate incident occurs. If your community group already has a relationship with the mayor, for example, you will be better positioned to ask for a public statement in the event of a hate crime.
- »» Educate community leaders about the causes and effects of hate. Sometimes, well-intentioned leaders don't understand that bias-motivated actions can have far-reaching effects across a community. Educate leaders about the impact of hate and the root causes of intolerance so their response can match the incident.
- »» Demand a quick, serious police response. The vigorous investigation and prosecution of hate crimes attract media attention to issues of tolerance and encourage the public to stand up against hate.
- »» Demand a strong public statement by political leaders. When elected officials issue

proclamations against hate, it helps promote tolerance and can unify communities. Silence, on the other hand, can be interpreted as the acceptance of hate.

»» Encourage leaders to name the problem. Local leaders sometimes try to minimize incidents fueled by hate or bias by not calling them hate crimes. As a result, victims and their communities can feel silenced, and national hate crime statistics become inaccurate.

»» Push leaders when they show bias or fail to act. Healing in the wake of a bias crime or incident — and building a more connected community — requires more than official statements. It also takes hard work. Ask your community leaders to walk the talk. Ask for their public support and involvement in rallies, community meetings, and long-term solutions that address the root causes of intolerance.

8. STAY ENGAGED: Promote acceptance and address bias before another hate crime can occur. Expand your comfort zone by reaching out to people outside your own groups.

Experts say the first step in changing hearts is to change behavior. Personal changes are important — the positive statements you make about others, challenging assumptions about people who are different — but community-wide changes are crucial for lasting change.

Not sure where to start? Consider the following:

»» Hold candlelight vigils, interfaith services, and other activities to bring together people of different races, religions, and ethnic groups.

»» Honor history and mark anniversaries. In Selma, Alabama, a multicultural fair is held on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when voting rights activists attempted to cross a bridge in their march to Montgomery and were beaten back by police.

»» Break bread together. Some communities have dinner clubs that bring together people of different ethnicities and income levels for a meal. These groups typically have no agenda, no speakers, and only one rule at their dinners: Sit next to someone you don't know.

»» Move from prayer to action. In California's San Fernando Valley, an interfaith council formed "home dialogues" with people from different faiths and cultures meeting together in their homes. In Covington, Kentucky, churchwomen conducted a letter-writing campaign to support hate crime legislation; they later promoted teacher training in race relations.

»» Begin a community conversation on race. Discussion groups, book clubs, chat rooms, and library gatherings can bring people together. Effective community conversations allow individuals to tell their stories, their immigration history, their daily encounters with discrimination, their fear about revealing sexual orientation, and so on.

»» Consider building something the community needs, and use it as an organizing tool — from a senior center to a new playground. Make sure residents from different backgrounds are included in the process.

»» Create a Facebook page or an online community discussion board celebrating diversity and inclusion.

9. TEACH ACCEPTANCE: Bias is learned in childhood. By age 3, children can be aware of racial differences and may have the perception that “white” is desirable. By age 12, they can hold stereotypes about ethnic, racial, and religious groups, or LGBT people. Because stereotypes underlie hate, tolerance education is critical.

FIVE STEPS FOR PARENTS

1. Examine your children’s textbooks and the curricula at their schools to determine whether they are equitable and multicultural.
2. Expose your child to multicultural experiences by intentionally expanding your circle of friends and experiences.
3. Encourage your children to become activists. They can form harmony clubs, build multicultural peace gardens, sponsor “walk in my shoes” activities, and create ways to interact with children of other cultures.
4. Examine the media your children consume, from internet sites to the commercials during their favorite TV shows. Stereotypes and examples of intolerance are bound to be present. Discuss these issues openly, as you would the dangers of cigarette smoking.
5. Model inclusive language and behavior. Children learn from the language you use and the attitudes you model. If you demonstrate a deep respect for other cultures, races, and walks of life, they most likely will, too.

10. DIG DEEPER: Look inside yourself for biases and stereotypes. Commit to disrupting hate and intolerance at home, at school, in the workplace, and in faith communities.

Acceptance, fundamentally, is a personal decision. It comes from an attitude that is learnable and embraceable: a belief that every voice matters, that all people are valuable, that no one is “less than.”

We all grow up with prejudices. Acknowledging them — and working through them — can be a scary and difficult process. It’s also one of the most important steps toward breaking down the walls of silence that allow intolerance to grow. Luckily, we all possess the power to overcome our ignorance and fear, and to influence our children, peers, and communities.

IT BEGINS WITH ME

Human rights experts recommend starting with the language we use and the assumptions we make about others. Am I quick to label people as “rednecks” or “illegals”? Do I look with disdain at families on welfare, or do I try to understand the socioeconomic forces that prevent many families from climbing out of poverty?

Here are other questions you might ask yourself:

- »»How wide is my circle of friends? How diverse are the people who visit my home?
- »»How integrated is my neighborhood? My child's school? My workplace?
- »»Do I take economic segregation and environmental racism for granted?
- »»Do I have the courage to ask a friend not to tell a sexist or racist or homophobic joke in my presence?
- »»Do I receive information about other cultures from members of those cultures, or from potentially biased, third-party sources?
- »»Do I take the time to listen and learn from other people's experiences — especially people with whom I might initially disagree?
- »»How often am I in the minority?

Many good books, films, and workshops can help guide you in self-examination. Reading the histories of other cultures and of different social justice movements — the civil rights movement, the Chicano movement, the fight for LGBT rights, for example — is a good start.

FIGHTING FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Sooner or later, your personal exploration will bump up against issues that take more than one person to solve. Deep racial disparities and systemic discrimination continue to plague our country. These issues cry out for answers and people to take them on.

In any city and state there are dozens of problems to address: hunger, affordable housing, domestic violence, school dropout rates, police brutality — the list goes on. A caring group of people, having coalesced to deal with hate, could remain together to tackle any number of societal problems.

Luckily, many towns and cities have neighborhood or citywide organizations that bring together people of different backgrounds to work for change. If yours does not, there are plenty of resources available to help you start one.

Prayer for the Huma Family (BCP p.815)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.