

# Blacks twice as likely to be hate crime targets

By Makebra M. Anderson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — African-Americans were more than twice as likely to be victims of race-based hate crimes last year than all other racial groups combined, the FBI reports.

According to the FBI, racial prejudice accounted for more than half of the 7,489 hate crimes reported in 2003, up slightly from 7,462 reported in 2002.

Of the 3,844 incidents targeting race, 2,548 were directed against African-Americans, 830 against Whites, 231 against Asians and Pacific Islanders and 76 percent against Native Americans and Alaskan Natives.

FBI data shows that hate crime reports have increased. In 1991 there were 4,558 hate

crimes reported. It rose for two consecutive years, climbing to 7,587 in 1993. The number fell to 5,932 in 1994, but just one year later the number rose again and has continued to rise.

Although the number of hate crimes against Blacks showed a slight increase, the prosecution of civil rights violations has declined.

In the last three years, the number of FBI referrals for prosecution in civil rights cases dropped by 514.

In 2001, the FBI referred 2,060 cases and in 2003 only 1,546, according to an analysis of Justice Department data by the Transactional Records Clearinghouse, a data gathering, data research and data distribution organization.

In addition to the decrease in the number of referrals, the number of actual pros-

ecutions from the referrals has also decreased.

In 2001, 128 people were prosecuted in civil rights cases; only 62 were prosecuted the following year.

The Department of Justice did not returned repeated phone calls from the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service seeking comment.

"We're extremely concerned about the decline in civil rights enforcement. We've had a number of talks and meetings with Congress and we're pushing them to do a better job of enforcing civil rights laws," said Hilary Shelton, director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Washington Bureau.

Although the enforcement of civil rights laws has

dropped, the number of civil rights complaints remains steady at approximately 12,000 annually according to the 2003 FBI Hate Crime Statistics Report.

A criminal civil rights violation involves the use or threat of force, and can occur with hate crimes, migrant worker exploitation, law enforcement misconduct, religious interference or property damage, health care access interference, such as phone threats or bombing and slavery rings.

"The number of hate crimes has not decreased," says Shelton.

"There really is no excuse. They've [FBI] chosen not to be vigilant in protecting human rights."

Of more than 7,000 hate crimes, racial bias represented 51.2 percent of re-

ported incidents. Bias against religions represented 17.9 percent, sexual orientation bias represented 16.5 percent, ethnicity bias 13.7 percent and disability bias only represented 4 percent of reported incidents.

Religious intolerance was the motivation behind 1,343 incidents. The majority of those were against Jews — 927, approximately the same as the year before.

Reported attacks against Muslims fell from 155 in 2002 to 149 in 2003, according to the FBI. The number of attacks based on sexual orientation was 1,239 in 2003, slightly less than the 1,244 reported in 2002.

The report shows that the states with the highest number of reported hate crimes were California with 1,472 (19.7 percent of crimes), fol-

lowed by New York with 602 incidents (8 percent of crimes), New Jersey close with 594 (7.6 percent of crimes), Michigan at 427 reports (5.7 percent of crimes) and Massachusetts reporting 403 incidents (5.4 percent of crimes).

Combined, these states account for 46.7 percent of all reported hate crimes in the United States.

"It appears that since September 11 the FBI certainly has not been as vigilant about protecting and enforcing those same civil rights laws that make up the body of the freedoms we call the U.S. of America," said Shelton.

"In many ways it would be sad to think that somehow the terrorist were actually successful in stripping away the most precious liberty—our freedom."

# Supervisors vote to shutter King/Drew Trauma Center

By Kevin Herrera  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — The Board of Supervisors voted 4-0, with one abstention, to close the King/Drew Medical Center trauma unit, despite last minute pleas from elected officials, health care professionals and community members to keep the county's second busiest trauma center open.

Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, whose district includes the troubled hospital, abstained. However, she was able to include an amendment to the motion — one that she called "insurance" — which sets clearly defined goals for restoring trauma services and various residencies at King/Drew once other areas of the hospital are brought up to code.

"With over 30 years of public service, I know that not everyone will agree with you, but you have to do what is right in your conscience," Burke said, explaining her reasoning behind the amendment to the motion for closure. "This hospital is going to be saved and we are going to set up mechanisms to restore any of the services that are removed."

The board, led by Chairman Don Knabe, once again stated for the record that they did not wish to close the hospital, but on the contrary, they view their votes to close the trauma center as a means of saving King/Drew for "the long term."

John Wallace, a spokesman for the Department of

Health Services, said the department will immediately begin shrinking King/Drew's service area in light of the vote, diverting patients to St. Francis Medical Center in Lynwood, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center near Torrance, and — once it goes online next month — the trauma center at California Hospital Medical Center near downtown Los Angeles.

Wallace said the "phase-down" at King/Drew will begin slowly and accelerate over the next 60 days.

The first report on the effects of the closure will be presented on Feb. 14, by Navigant, the management firm supervisors hired to make reforms at King/Drew, Wallace said. At that time, supervisors will be able to make a decision to continue with the suspension of trauma services or reinstate the unit, which served more than 2,100 critically injured patients last year.

County health officials, specifically Chief Medical Officer Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, recommended closing the trauma unit as the best way to shore-up services in other areas at King/Drew. The hospital has been under fire by regulators over the last year for failing to provide quality care, with staff often committing errors that have led to patient deaths. The errors seem to have been caused by a severe shortage of qualified nurses, a lack of management and a failure by the county to make upgrades to the hospital's infrastruc-

ture. If the county does not make drastic reforms at King/Drew, it could lose more than \$200,000 in federal funds plus its accreditation, which would almost certainly lead to the closure of the hospital, county health officials said.

While the trauma center's closure was expected for weeks, those opposed were devastated and enraged, evident by their audible displeasure as the crowd of more than 150 often uttered boos and hissed as supervisors and Garthwaite spoke. Some held signs reading, "Save Trauma. Save King," while others chose to shout, with one elderly man challenging county staff to a brawl. He was removed by sheriff's deputies.

Residents of South Los Angeles are enraged by the vote, which they see as another deliberate attempt to close King/Drew completely. Charges of racism have been levied.

"I am convinced that this is a major plan by Dr. Garthwaite to dismantle the hospital," said Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally, D-Los Angeles, a staunch supporter of King/Drew who has convened a series of hearings to discuss the plight of the hospital and the alarming trend of hospitals closing across the state because of financial woes. "Dr. Garthwaite is an intellectually dishonest man, and you can quote me."

"You're putting our children and our communities, from Inglewood to Lynwood, at risk. Anyone who drives

down that [Glenn Anderson] 105 [Freeway] is at risk," said Watts resident Janine Watkins.

She said the county's mismanagement and understaffing at King/Drew has forced the facility's doc-

tors to "do 20 jobs to most people's one." Watkins also criticized Garthwaite specifically. "You slighted our community," she said. "You slighted our doctors."


Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald, D-Carson, Rep.

Maxine Waters, D-Los Angeles, and Martin Ludlow and Antonio Villaraigosa of the Los Angeles City Council were among the public officials who spoke in opposition to closing the trauma unit

(See Trauma, Page 6)


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