

Hate crimes reach 5-year high in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hate crimes in Los Angeles County soared last year to their highest mark in five years even as overall crime dropped across the region, according to a report just released.

The annual report by the county's human relations commission shows 763 hate crimes were reported in 2007, a 28 percent increase from 2006.

The numbers buck last year's overall crime trends, which saw a decrease of 6 percent in Los Angeles County and 5 percent in the city of Los Angeles, the report notes.

The most common hate crimes were those motivated by race, with 310 committed against Black people and 125 against Latinos. However, crimes in which anti-immigrant slurs were used dropped slightly.

A majority of the hate crimes involved vandalism and simple assault, but aggravated assault was involved in 187 of them, a nearly 90 per-

cent increase over the year before.

Civil rights attorney Connie Rice, who had not seen the report, said it is important to remember that hate crimes represent only a tiny percentage of overall crime numbers. She said the increase is likely a reflection of economic times.

"When economic times gets tighter, hate crime violence goes up," she said, adding that child abuse and domestic violence often increase for the same reason.

Gangs are a factor in many hate crimes. In all, 16 percent of hate crimes last year were committed by gang members. According to the report, gang members committed 120 hate crimes last year, an increase of 14 percent from 2006.

The extent to which race is driving the area's gang crisis is a subject of ongoing debate. Sheriff Lee Baca has said he considers it a major factor, while Los Angeles police Chief William Bratton and other officials downplay



Concerned citizens throughout America want to bring awareness to growing numbers of hate crimes in the county.

suggestions of racial tension.

The report states that White supremacist activity

continues to be "surprisingly high," with 131 hate crimes showing evidence of being

committed by White racists. The report notes that friction between Black and Latino residents continues to be a major instigator of hate crimes. There were 116 hate crimes unrelated to gangs

that were committed by Latinos against Blacks and Blacks against Latinos.

The commission said 111 hate crimes based on sexual (See *Hate Crimes*, Page 10)

Journalists

(Continued from Page 3)

Los Angeles Daily News and member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. "We're not going to write about it, so you're allowed to voice your emotion or feeling."

Still, "people shouldn't be throwing underwear," said Veronica Garcia, a NAHJ board member and copy editor who spent 17 years at the *Los Angeles Times*. "We're journalists. We should strive to be a little objective."

Conservatives have spent years decrying a liberal media bias; Democrats fought over how Hillary Clinton's primary coverage compared with Obama's. This week, the campaign of John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee, sniped at the media constellation chasing Obama on his excursion through the Middle East and Europe. And questions of personal politics have plagued journalists of all backgrounds.

But even against this backdrop, the Unity journalists face some unique pressures. In 2004, Democrat John Kerry inspired a standing ovation; President Bush got a few boos during his speech, which disturbed some of the journalists present. This year, McCain declined an invitation to appear at Unity, citing scheduling conflicts.

Barbara Ciara, president of NABJ and the anchor/managing editor at WTKR in Norfolk, Va., said it would be inappropriate "to show enthusiasm on any level" on Sunday because of a perception that minority journalists' coverage is slanted by their ethnicity.

"Maybe I'm a little bit old school, but I do believe there's a trust we have to achieve with our audience of viewers, listeners and readers," she said. "In order to trust you, they have to believe you're going to act dispassionately. You can't start jumping around like a little bumblebee just because a bee that looks like you is in the room."

Leonard Pitts, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *Miami Herald*, believes that media objectivity is "a fairy tale we're supposed to pledge allegiance to." As one of the panelists who will question Obama on Sunday, he's more concerned with being fair to both sides, and he isn't bothered by the prospect of a few extra cheers.

"It's asking a little bit much to ask a room full of African-American journalists, or a room full of journalists of color, who have seen people like them and probably seem themselves excluded many times on the basis of color, not to have some sort of emotional reaction to the success of the person who may arguably become the first African-American president," said Pitts, who is Black.

The fear at the convention, especially among veterans, is that emotions will run amok given the many young journalists, public relations professionals and sponsors in attendance.

"Taking pictures afterward, asking for autographs, acting like groupies," said Alfredo Araiza, a photographer for the *Arizona Daily Star*. He and Ramon Chavez, a University of Oklahoma journalism professor and member of the Native American Journalists Association, led a student seminar at Unity on how to act professionally at news conferences.

"I have the feeling the exact opposite will happen here," said Chavez.

So does Nicole Newsum, a 27-year-old public relations executive who described herself as "obsessed" with the candidate. "I'll be screaming," she said.

Said Luz Villarreal, an associate producer for "Dateline NBC": "I don't think it's such a bad thing if for 15 minutes you take off your reporter hat and respond to (Obama) as a human being at an event where you're surrounded by people of color and you're here for a united cause."

In the new media world of attack blogs, pundit power and felled newspapers, perhaps Obama's candidacy is marking yet another milestone.

"Barack Obama is the Jackie Robinson of our era," said Pitts, the columnist. "There's no getting around that, there's no asking people not to respond to that... Journalists are recruited from the human race. And as long as they're recruited from the human race they're going to have emotions, and they're going to have feelings."

Officer-involved death riles Inglewood

By Olu Alemoru

Special to Sentinel-Voice

INGLEWOOD (NNPA) — An extraordinary council meeting recently, saw widespread community anger over the police shooting death of Black postal worker Kevin Wicks by Inglewood Police Officer Brian Ragan, who was already under investigation in connection with the shooting death of Michael Byoune two months ago.

All regular council business was deferred because members of Wicks' family, outraged residents, community activists, media and a phalanx of Inglewood police officers crowded into the ninth floor city council chambers.

The crush of people trying to get in was initially so great that officials opened a second meeting room on a lower floor to accommodate the overflow.

Back from her vacation, Police Chief Jacqueline Seabrooks stood grim-faced for more than two hours as a number of speakers took to the podium and called for her resignation.

Those calling for her resignation included Najee Ali, director of Project Islamic HOPE and Min. Tony Muhammad of the Nation of Islam. State Sen. Mark Rid-



Los Angeles activist Najee Ali voices frustration over the death of a Black postal worker by an Inglewood policeman.

ley-Thomas also observed the proceedings.

Ali, a spokesperson for the family, accused Seabrooks of "spitting in the face of Inglewood residents" by not making an immediate statement on the latest tragedy.

"We are demanding that the chief offer her resignation," Ali said. "It's not her fault that she was on vacation, but it was her fault that she did not cut that vacation

civilian police review board, as well as a federal civil rights investigation into the department.

Meanwhile, Muhammad recalled a community meeting held with Seabrooks after the Byoune incident, where she promised that the officer in question would be placed on administrative leave until the investigation was complete.

"Someone betrayed us," he said. "How did that man get back on the streets? Heads need to roll."

Family members, including Kenya Carter, Wicks' girlfriend and mother of his two children, grandmother Dorothy Nelson and Kenya's father and brother, Fred Carter and Fred Carter Jr., followed Ali to the podium.

"We want to see justice served," Kenya Carter said. "We need the truth. Two more children are now without their father. Kevin was a good guy, a family man, a good father to his daughters."

Wicks, 38, was shot and killed after police responded to a domestic disturbance call at an apartment in the 100 block of North Hillcrest Boulevard.

According to Capt. Eve Irvine, commanding officer of the department's detective bureau, Ragan was one of

(See *Officer*, Page 11)