

Why Workplace Hate Crimes Cannot be Tolerated

Workplace hate crimes are on the rise and they are deteriorating our work environment and demeaning to the employees who are victims. This form of workplace violence cannot be tolerated.

By the FBI's definition: a hate crime is a prejudice motivated crime against a person in whole or by part by the offender's bias against a race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or national origin.

According to The Southern Poverty Law Center, an astounding 954 hate groups are currently operating in the United States!

We see hate crimes everywhere. On television, in churches that perform same-sex marriages, white supremacist rallies in Charlottesville, office holiday parties in San Bernardino — the list goes on. However, we don't think about them as much in our own workplaces.

As a workplace violence expert, I have seen a lot of hate crimes played out in organizations across the United States. Usually, these incidents are labeled as harassment, bullying, and even personality conflicts.

Companies either have a lack of awareness of the situation or are in fear of actually identifying a deeper problem that may be permeating their workplace.

Hate Crime Data is Notoriously Difficult to Gather

The FBI is required to track these crimes and has been publishing related statistics since 1996. Hate crime counts are around 6,000 annually. However, a June 2017 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates a total closer to 250,000.

One of the reasons for the gap is the FBI Hate Crimes statistics rely on voluntary reporting by local state and law enforcement agencies. Their numbers may not make it into the national tally.

Hate Crimes Don't get Reported to the Authorities

Ken Schwencke writes 54 percent of the roughly 250,000 people who said they were victimized in recent years chose not to file a formal complaint with the authorities.

The question is why?

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) states anti-Semitic crimes increased by 30% in 2016 and by an astounding 86% in 2017.

"Hate incidents do not seem to follow a distinct pattern, every minority is affected," says Heidi Beirich, director of Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Project.

"Some types," Beirich states, "are more underreported than others, specifically in areas where people feel insecure because they lack tight social networks."

At a San Antonio manufacturing company, several employees filed racial harassment charges with the EEOC. Afterward, a noose was displayed at their workplace. In response to employee complaints about the noose, a superintendent dismissed complaints as 'bullshit.' The superintendent also stated that he felt the noose "was no big deal," and that the employees were "too sensitive."

Workplace hate crimes should be considered as violence. As an employer, this should be covered in your updated workplace violence policy.

Three Things You Can do to Stop Workplace Hate Crimes

Take ACTION! Apathy and lack of action are interpreted as acceptance by haters

Report EVERY incident and ensure that your workplace violence policy directly speaks to the issue of hate crimes

SUPPORT the victim! They may be fearful and feeling vulnerable. Assure them that they are not alone

– *Written by Carol Cambridge, Workplace Violence Expert*