

'A record-breaking year of hatred?'

Statistics simply do not prove that the country is 'awash with hate'

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There seems to be a competition between liberal cities to be the most hateful place in America. Following Seattle's recent announcement that it experienced more than 500 "hate crimes" and serious "hate incidents" during 2018 — which resulted in a feature story in the Seattle Times — Washington, D.C., recently declared that it suffered "204 suspected hate crimes" last year. Extremism researcher Brian Levin popped up to declare that the nation's capital thus had the highest per capita hate crime rate among large American cities, and the hometown Post ran a major piece decrying D.C.'s "Record Breaking Year of Hatred."

Fortunately for normal Americans, who tend to like our countrymen across racial and class lines, the reality in both D.C. and Seattle is very different from the headlines. Investigating the alleged hate epidemic in Seattle at the behest of the online journal Quillette, I found first that only 125 of 521 incidents reported to the police were serious enough — i.e. felonies or A/B misdemeanors — to be legally prosecuted as hate crimes.

Of those, very few were the work of serious bigots: The typical perpetrator was a mentally ill, homeless man. According to undisputed data from the Seattle city auditor, 22 percent of hate perps were "living unsheltered" at the time of their crime, 20 percent were mentally disturbed and another 20 percent were drunks or otherwise "severely intoxicated." As a result of the low-level, anonymous nature of many of these cases, successful prosecutions in Seattle hate matters are vanishingly rare. While the city reports more hate crimes than 33 U.S. states — including Florida — the total number of Emerald City hate crime cases actually prosecuted to conviction between 2012 and 2017 was 37 — about six per year.

One major factor behind Seattle's decision to pursue incidents of verbal assault by vagrants as hate crimes seems to have been the city's 2015 decision to hire a sort of Special Master for Hate — a brass-level bias crimes coordinator, whose job includes "community outreach" aimed at spreading awareness of the definition of hate crime and presumably generating new reports. The hate crime definition used by Seattle has itself expanded far past the national standard in recent years, going beyond race and religion to label attacks motivated by political ideology, age, homelessness and "marital or parental status" as hate crimes. Given these two variables, it is probably no coincidence that hate incidents in Seattle "increased" by 162 from 2016-

17 and by another 103 from 2017-18. In a remarkable display of honesty, the city's auditor pointed out that this "rise in reported hate crimes does not necessarily mean there are more of these crimes occurring."

Unpacking the Washington, D.C., data reveals similar patterns. First, the "record breaking" per capita surge in hate crime turns out to involve an increase of exactly 26 incidents — from 178 in 2017 to 204 in 2018. Further, of the 204 suspected hate crimes reported in 2018, just 59 cases led to an adult suspect being identified and facing charges of any kind. Exactly three 2018 D.C. cases were formally prosecuted as hate crimes, and charges in one of those were rapidly dropped. Despite an intense focus on bias crimes — the primary District of Columbia legal authority has two bias crime coordinators — actual hate crime prosecutions and convictions in the capital seem to be at their lowest ebb in 10 years. At least off the record, many D.C. police openly attribute this to the minor and random nature of many incidents now reported as hate crimes, such as anonymous "racist or anti-Semitic graffiti."

Analyzing D.C. hate crime numbers leads to a taboo but essential discussion about the real nature of crime in America. The archetypal American racial crime would probably be five skinheads or rednecks beating a black man, and almost all articles about alleged increases in hate crime mention this trope or refer ominously to "the age of Trump." The Washington Post certainly goes in for a bit of this with Mike Miller opening his article with the story of a 12-year old black girl attacked by a white racist, and opining that many scholars see a connection between "Trump's ugly rhetoric" toward persons of color and "what has been unleashed in communities across the country." The data, however, tell a rather different story.

First, the majority of District of Columbia hate incidents have nothing to do with race at all. In 2018, 94 D.C. hate crime cases involved people insulted or attacked because of gay or transgender identity, while only 75 involved a racial or ethnic attack. Importantly, D.C. is a 65 percent non-white city, and the town's gay bashers seem to largely match its demographics: A typical case reported by The Washington Post involved a black gay man (Rudolph Williams) who was struck with a champagne bottle and called a "faggy [expletive]" inside a heavily black nightclub.

Even among racial hate crime cases, 15 (20 percent) involved attacks on whites, 24 (32 percent) involved attacks on Hispanics by African-Americans or whites, and only 26 (35 percent) were anti-black attacks — presumably not all committed by whites. The suspect in the most disturbing anti-Semitic attack described by The Post eventually turned out to be an Ethiopian guy named Yohannes Lemma. In another case, the paper, to its credit, reported in full, that the victim was a white man attacked with a rock for supporting President Trump. Should we take Washington, D.C.'s reported increase in hate crime at face value, the surge most definitely does not consist primarily of Trump-crazed conservatives attacking innocent minorities. Simply put, actually analyzing the data on hate crime from two major cities should remind us to be skeptical of claims that our great country is "awash with hate."

Wilfred Reilly is the author of "Hate Crime Hoax: How The Left is Selling A Fake Race War" (Regnery).

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