

Hate crimes appear in the form of symbolic messages, threatening cold calls, slurs in public places, vandalism actions and even physical assaults.

In her study, “Comparison of Hate Crime Rates Across Protected and Unprotected Groups”, Rebecca Stotzer proposes a definition of hate crimes: „Hate crimes (also known as bias-motivated crimes) occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group, usually defined by racial group, religion, sexual orientation, disability, class, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, gender identity, or political affiliation” (2007)

Hate crimes are usually aimed against the so-called special groups, different from the rest of the society because of their diversity. Hate crimes are usually translated through violent behavior towards these groups, aggressions, attacks, oppressions, vandalize actions. These offenses are very intensely debated and mediated in our today’s society, though they keep occurring and their number increases alarming, according to mass media reports.

Hate crimes have become a very serious problem in the college society too. Since the education system encourages diversity, students of different religion, economical, political or national background, race or ethnicity, etc., must study and live together in the same campus or even the same rooms.

In an article dated from March 26, 2010, published in www.vcstar.com, Jean Cowden Moore quotes Juanita Hall, Senior Director of multicultural and international programs at California Lutheran University, who presents her specialized perception upon campuses: “A university campus is a microcosm of society”. So, according to Hall, a campus is a universe in itself, guiding by its own rules, forming a particular collective. Hall continues her observations, talking about the diversity among the students who live together in the same campus, mentioning also how their interaction is a process of accepting their differences.

“When you bring people together from diverse backgrounds and ask them to live together, you’re bound to have different attitudes. Students are in the process of learning to live in a diverse and multicultural society, and part of that process is making mistakes.”

Some students disapprove this motley environment, having a different perspective about whom and how their colleagues should be like. So they make their own rules, by attacking, in various ways, the targeted groups. The attacks wear multiple forms: from verbal offenses to life threatening injuries.

Just this year, in April, an Afro-American student was stabbed in a Californian city – Chico. As *CNN Justice* informs in “California college’s student president stabbed; hate crime alleged” article, the student, Joseph Igbineweka, was born in Nigeria and he was the president of the California State University, Chico. On the day he was attacked, Igbineweka was walking in the Chico campus neighborhood, when he was followed by two men who used racial insults at his address. After ignoring them for a while, Igbineweka finally turned towards the two men and he was stabbed. One of the assaulters was identified as a 19 years young man. After the assault, in which he suffered serious injuries, Joseph Igbineweka stated that he will be actively involved in actions meant to reduce violence in the community. (2010)

In his article “College Enacts Hate Crime Response Protocol”, published on November 5th, 2010 in www.thesandb.com, Solomon Miller presents another hate crime, happened in another American campus. At Grinnell College, on the Halloween’s night, a dorm room was vandalized. The

homophobic messages written on the walls of the room were a hate crime signature, this time against a student's sexual orientation. The girl and her roommate left the dorm for the Halloween weekend, leaving the door of their room open, a casual practice in Grinnell College. When they returned they found their room devastated and filled with homophobic insults. The targeted victim was not at her first abuse: she found some homophobic messages painted on her car and some posters claiming a „safe space”, installed on the locked door of her room. This college firmly responded, forming a „Hate Crime Response Protocol” commission and implemented actions to support the freedom of every social group against the hate crimes actions.

According to *News10.net*, in the article “UC Davis: Swastika Carved into Jewish Student's Door Probed as a Hate Crime”, a Jewish student in UC Davis University found a carved 2 inch Swastika symbol on her door room. (2010). This was a religious hate crime message, meant to intimidate the Jewish community.

Bryan Richardson also presents a hate crime case in his article “Hate Crime on University of Missouri Campus?”, dated February 26th, 2010 and published in www.pocketfives.com. In February 2010, during the celebration of the „Black History Month”, the Black Culture Center from the University of Missouri was the target of a racial hate crime: cotton bolls were sprinkled in front of the Center. At that time, the police was investigating the case in order to establish if this was a hate crime case or not. But the signs are too visible for even questioning this (the article too was interrogative). It is well known the fact that before the Civil War the Afro-American people were enslaved and forced to work on the cotton plantations. Spread cotton around a black studies center, in the month they celebrate their History makes this a classic hate crime message.

A hate crime targets a group of people, not just an individual. The attackers choose their victims after closely following their habits. They incline to make a statement by their crimes against the diversity. Their main purpose is to exclude, to isolate the different ones from the society. So, by attacking individuals, they are sending some messages to the entire community they target. They aim to discourage the diversity just because they don't understand it, because they don't like it and because they consider it a threat to their social opportunities, due to the positive discrimination policies.

There is to be considered an analysis upon the gender construction, for understanding if men's reactions are different than women's, when talking about abuses on diversity. The hate crime persecutors are rarely identified, because the special groups (people of different religions, race, ethnicity, sexual orientations) are protected by law; actually because of this they are called “protected groups”. But, as seen in some of the presented cases, the aggressors where identified as males. According to the studied articles, some men tend to react violent and brutal when committing a hate crime. Because this study can't identify if women were involved in the presented hate crime cases, the analysis is limited in presenting a differentiation between gender reactions to diversity.

The actions of a hate crime aggressor may not be related to gender. The assaulters may choose to act spontaneous or by communicating symbolic messages (a Jewish swastika carved on a door's room in UC Davis campus, cotton balls at Missouri University's “Black Culture Center” or homophobic messages at Grinnell Hotel). Is true that the study identified several men being involved in hate crime aggressions, but even so, there are not enough clues to make comparisons between gender constructions when it comes to manifesting their disapproval, slurs or hate towards the protected groups.

Campuses are usually safe, fun places, where young people get together and share their knowledge, their perceptions and the specificities of their cultural backgrounds. This is mainly the reason for which the diversity among universities is encouraged: facing other cultures, other ways of life, knowing something else about life, a different perception from your own. Is not a crime to have different opinions about things, but it becomes a state of conflict when one disrespects the others' opinions. It may rapidly evolve in a hate crime when the disrespect transforms into action.

Hate crimes are jeopardizing the college society, by compromising people's individualities. If students can't manifest their diversity, in speaking, in expression, in culture, in views, they will not be able to evolve. This is the role of the universities in society: to enforce the communication between different individuals and groups, to enhance the liberty of speaking and of expressing new ideas, that come from various social and cultural backgrounds. The society evolves through knowledge and communication and most of all through acceptance.

The presence of the hate crimes in colleges, in campuses raises a big problem regarding the security of students in dorms and in universities as well. As shown in the case studies, some students' rooms were vandalized or they were even physically assaulted just because they were different. First of all, it is a constitutional right for each individual to express his/her own individuality by: ethnicity, religion, sexuality, political views, etc, so long as he/she doesn't manifest immoral. Second, these acts of hate crimes usually happen because of intolerance, arrogance (the supremacy of the White Man myth), anger (the increase of the power and rights of some of the protected communities), lack of knowledge and understanding (of another's culture, ideas, life).

As seen in the presented articles the colleges and the campuses that had victims of hate crimes decided to take action: some of them formed committees, other increased the presence of the police officers and there were organized actions, demonstrations for tolerance and pro-diversity.

It is very sadly that the hate crimes victims sometimes choose not to speak about the abuses and the offenses brought against them. Some of them are afraid of isolation or of the riposte of the offenders, while others think that they just don't have enough evidence to prove that they were victims of a hate crime. According to Rayburn, Eareywine and Davison in their study "Base Rates of Hate Crime Victimization Among College Students", these victims will be long time affected at a psychological level and their social behavior will change: some may choose the isolation, while others may choose to fight back.