

Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA:

A Report on Hate Crimes And Violence Against
People Experiencing Homelessness, 2006

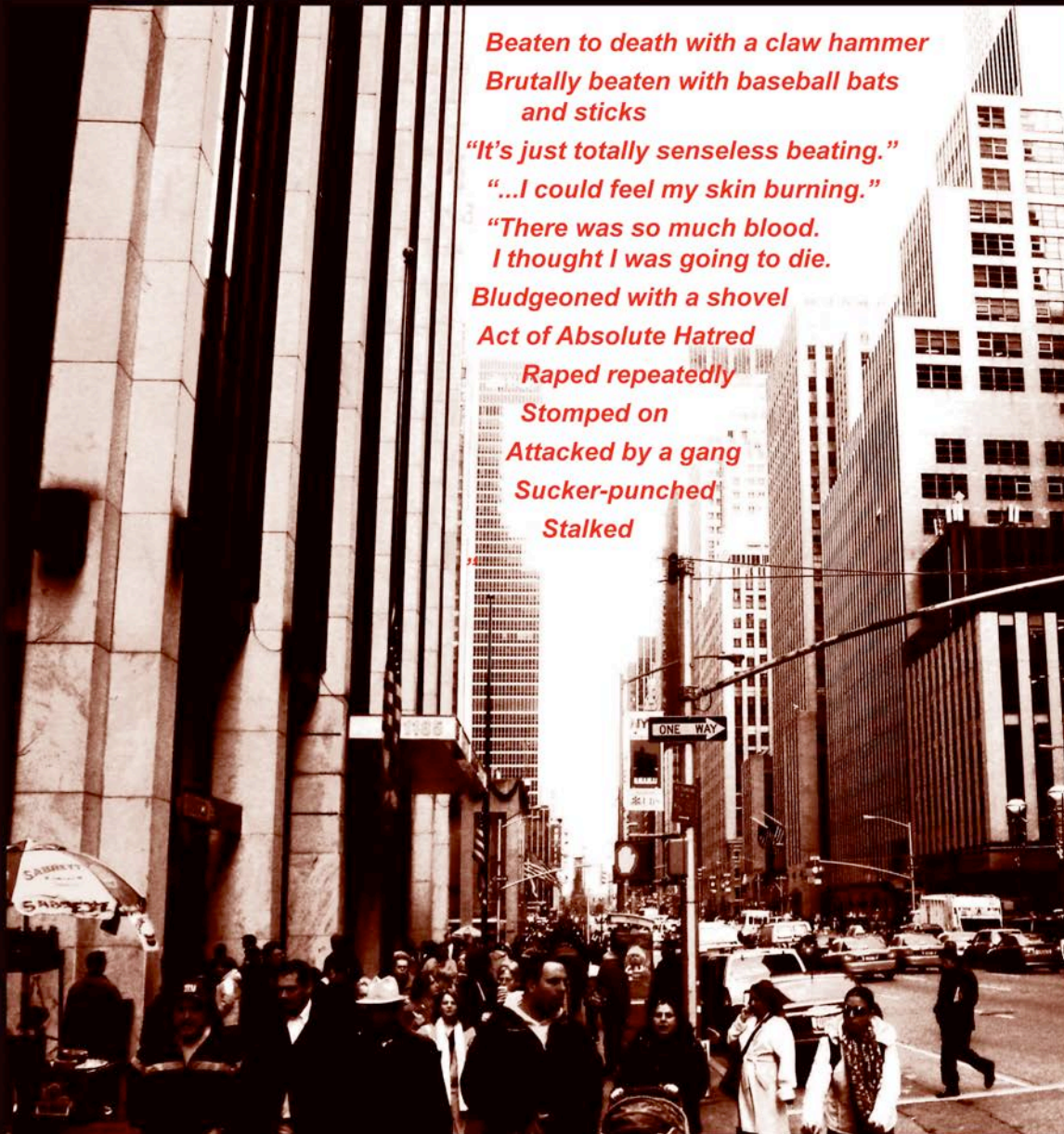


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements:	3
Introduction:	5
2006 ANNUAL REPORT	
Title Page:	10
Dedication:	11
Executive Summary:	12
Summary of Hate Crimes/Violence Data in 2006:	15
Summary of Teen Involvement in Hate Crimes/ Violent Acts:	17
Summary of Victims Who Were Middle-Aged:	18
Cities/Counties where Hate Crimes/Violence Occurred in 2006:	19
Map of Cities/Counties where Hate Crimes/Violence Occurred in 2006:	21
States where Hate Crimes/Violence Occurred in 2006:	22
Map of States where Hate Crimes/Violence Occurred in 2006:	24
Historical Summary of Hate Crimes/Violence Data for 1999-2006:	25
Comparison of Hate Crime Homicides vs. Lethal Attacks on Homeless Individuals:	26
Hate Crimes Survey Summary and Results:	27
Recommendations for Action:	35
Model State Legislation:	37
Model Legislative/Organizing/Public Education Efforts in California and Maine:	42
Listing of Incidents by City	46
Case Descriptions Involving Death:	47
Case Descriptions Involving Rape:	54
Case Descriptions Involving Violent Acts/Setting on Fire:	56
Case Descriptions Involving Violent Acts/Beatings:	58

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

Case Descriptions Involving Police Brutality:	75
Case Descriptions Involving Threats/Intimidations:	76
The Link between Violence against Homeless People and the Criminalization of Homelessness:	77
Video Exploitation of Homeless People:	78
National Media Coverage:	83
Appendix A: Sources:	90
Appendix B: Mr. Gast Lives Everywhere: A Homeless Folk Tale:	101
Appendix C: NCH Hate Crimes Public Service Ad:	104

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Sean Cononie, Lois Cross and Mark Targett are homeless activists with the Helping People in America organization located in Hollywood, Florida. All three have dedicated tremendous time and energy to stop hate crimes/violence against homeless people. Cononie's organization is the most active local organization nationwide doing work on the hate crimes/violence issue. He is viewed as both a local and national expert/spokesperson on this issue. Targett is best known for video broadcast work of the news to advocates across the United States on vicious attacks to the homeless by using the latest technology in multimedia means. Cross does all the media/public relations on this issue for both Helping People in America and assists the National Coalition for the Homeless in getting the word out to the media.

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Michael Stoops, acting executive director of NCH, provides ongoing staffing support for the Civil Rights Work Group/Grassroots Organizing Committee, a nationwide network of homeless advocates committed to documenting and stopping civil rights violations of homeless individuals plus documenting hate crimes/violence against homeless people. He is also the project director for NCH's National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (NCHROP). He has served as the

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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NCH would like to also thank the numerous unnamed interns and volunteers who have worked on this report throughout 2006.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, homeless individuals in America faced another year of brutality that ranged from assault to killings. Sadly, these gruesome accounts are just a few of many that demonstrate the hate/violence faced by people experiencing homelessness each year. The following report documents 142 hate crimes and violent acts that occurred in 2006, collected from newspapers and reports across the country. The narratives bring to light the discrimination and senseless violence faced daily by so many of our country's homeless citizens. Here are just a few illustrative cases:

In February, a 62-year old homeless woman from San Antonio, Texas was severely beaten around 1 a.m. by a man with a tire iron. The beating came after this woman rejected his demands for sex. Despite her serious injuries, she was able to walk to a convenience store and get help. A responding officer described her face as being "pulverized".

Last March in Orlando, a homeless man named August Felix, 54, was found having been severely kicked, punched and beaten with an unknown blunt object. Felix was living near the railroad tracks when a group of teenagers attacked him for fun. Other homeless individuals were targeted, but Felix was the only resultant death.

In August, Tara Cole, a 32-year old homeless woman from Nashville, Tennessee, was pushed off the dock where she slept every night into the nearby river. Cole's body was recovered from the river on August 21, ten days after her murder.

Samplings of the headlines in the case narrative section of this annual report say it all:

- **Homeless Man Killed 19 Minutes after Calling 911 (January)**
- **Homeless Man Beat by Three Teens (February)**
- **Homeless Man Kicked, Set on Fire in Park (March)**
- **Homeless Man Saved after Being Thrown in the River (March)**
- **Handicapped Homeless Man Set Afire (June)**
- **Homeless Woman Tasered by Police Officers (July)**
- **Teens Beat Homeless Man with Golf Clubs (August)**
- **Four Friends Arrested for Beating Homeless Man to Death (September)**

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The main objective of this report is to educate lawmakers, advocates, and the general public about the problem of hate crimes and violence against homeless people in order to instigate change and ensure protection of civil rights for everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances or housing status. As part of its mission, the National Coalition for the Homeless is committed to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to end homelessness. A major component of these changes must include the societal guarantee of safety and protection and a commitment by lawmakers to combat the hate crimes and violent acts against people who experience homelessness.

THE REPORTS

Over the past eight years (1999-2006), advocates and homeless shelter workers from around the country have seen an alarming, nationwide sustained increase in reports of homeless men, women and even children being killed, beaten, and harassed. In response to these concerns, the National Coalition for the Homeless has produced eight reports documenting these acts.

- 1999:** *No More Homeless Deaths! Hate Crimes: A Report Documenting Violence Against Men and Women Homeless in the U.S.*
- 2000:** *A Report of Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Who Are Homeless in the United States in 2000*
- 2001:** *Hate. A Compilation of Violent Crimes Committed Against Homeless People in the U.S. in 2001*
- 2002:** *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness in 1999-2002*
- 2003:** *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness in 2003*
- 2004:** *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness 2004*
- 2005:** *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness in 2005*
- 2006:** *Hate, Violence, and Death on Main Street USA: A Report on Hate Crimes and Violence Against People Experiencing Homelessness 2006*

This latest report continues to maintain the same goals and objectives as in the previous ones:

1. To compile the incidents of hate crimes and violence that NCH has received and reviewed in order to document this alarming trend against people who experience homelessness.
2. To make lawmakers and the public aware of this serious issue.
3. To recommend proactive measures to be taken.

HATE CRIMES

The term “hate crime” generally conjures up images of cross burnings and lynching, swastikas on Jewish synagogues, and horrific murders of gays and lesbians. In 1968 the United States Congress enacted the first modern law aimed at punishing some offenses now known as “hate crimes.” The statute, 18 U.S.C. § 245, made it a federal offense to target people on the basis of race, color and national origin because of their exercise of particular activities such as voting, public school attendance, or jury service.¹

Hate crimes are those offenses where a person or property is intentionally targeted, in whole or substantial part, because of the actual or perceived status characteristic of another person. Hate crimes are also commonly known as bias-motivated crimes because some degree of prejudice is usually apparent in the attacks. Interestingly, most hate crimes are not committed by hate group members or hardened bigots, but rather by those whose less entrenched prejudice is unleashed by a desire to protect turf, thrill seek, or achieve validation among their peers. Like other types of hate crime victims the homeless have been targeted by the same kinds of offenders ranging from neo-Nazis to neighborhood “defenders” to idle youths. While their levels of conviction vary, all share demeaning stereotypes which identify the homeless as appropriate targets for aggression.¹

In documenting hate crimes and violence against homeless people, and the data and documentation used for this report, NCH relies on news reports and information relayed to us by homeless advocates, shelter providers and homeless people across the country. Although NCH acts as the nationwide repository of hate crimes/violence against homeless people, there is no systematic method of collecting and documenting such reports. Many of these hate crimes and/or violent acts go unpublicized and/or unreported, thereby making it difficult to assess the true magnitude of the problem.

This report attempts to chronicle violence against homeless persons, to the best of our resources. Often, homeless people do not report crimes committed against them because of mental health issues, substance abuse, fear of retaliation, past incidents, or frustration with the police. Some cases this year were also omitted because the victims were found beaten or killed, but no suspects could be identified. In addition, while this report does take into account incidents of sexual assault, however a large number of these accounts go unreported, and as such are not included in the report.

LEGISLATION

Subsequently, federal bias crime laws enacted have provided additional coverage. The Hate Crimes Statistics Act of 1990 (HCSA) mandates the Justice Department to collect data from law enforcement agencies about “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based upon race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.”² The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act,

¹ Source: B. Levin, Hate Crimes: Worse by Definition, Journal of Contemporary Justice (1999)

² Source: Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, www.civilrights.org

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

enacted as a section of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, defines a hate crime as “a crime in which the defendant intentionally selects a victim, or in the case of a property crime, the property that is the object of the crime, because of the actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.” This measure only applies to inter alia, attacks and vandalism that occur in national parks and on federal property.³

The most recent proposed legislation includes the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005, which was introduced in the U.S. House (H.R. 2662), and in the U.S. Senate (S. 1145) in the 109th Congress (2005-2006). In September 2005, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005 was added to the Children’s Safety Act of 2005 (H.R. 3132) as an amendment. H.R. 3132, including the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005, passed the U.S. House of Representatives with 371 Members voting in favor of the passage. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on September 15 2005; however it did not pass the Senate prior to the closing of the 109th Congress. The Act will be reintroduced again during the 110th Congress (2007-2008). The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which has broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, “authorizes the Attorney General to provide technical, forensic, prosecutorial, or other assistance in the criminal investigation or prosecution of any crime that: (1) constitutes a crime of violence under Federal law or a felony under State or Indian tribal law; and (2) is motivated by prejudice based on the race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability of the victim or is a violation of the hate crimes laws of the State or tribe.” There is currently no federal criminal prohibition against violent crimes directed at individuals because of their housing status.

Also noteworthy was the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005 (H.R. 259), which was introduced into the 109th Congress by Ms. Jackson-Lee of Texas, but did not pass in the U.S. House or U.S. Senate during the 109th Congress (2005-2006). This bill is an abridged and slightly altered version of H.R. 2662 and S.1145.⁴

The United States Supreme Court upheld carefully drafted hate crime penalty enhancement laws in *Wisconsin v. Mitchell*, 508 U.S. 476 (1993). The state law at issue punished an offender's intentional selection of a victim or property based on the status characteristics of another person such as race, religion, color, national origin, and ancestry. Today, at least forty-six states have hate crime laws, though none specifically enhance penalties on those who attack the homeless. Six states are currently considering adding homeless status to their hate crime laws or related statutes protecting vulnerable victims.⁵

The National Coalition for the Homeless fully supports housing status as a protected class under hate crimes statutes and NCH hopes to include this in future pieces of legislation. Through the

³ Source: Anti-Defamation League

⁴ Source: www.Thomas.loc.gov

⁵ Source: B. Levin, Hate Crimes: Worse by Definition, *Journal of Contemporary Justice*, Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism: California State University, San Bernardino.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

inclusion of housing status, hate crimes and violent acts toward people experiencing homelessness will be more appropriately handled and prosecuted. Additionally, if victims know that a system is in place to prosecute such crimes, they are more likely to come forward to report these crimes. People who are forced to live and sleep on the streets for lack of an appropriate alternative are in an extremely vulnerable situation, and it is unacceptable that hate crime prevention laws do not protect them.

**Report on
Hate Crimes and Violence
Against People Experiencing
Homelessness in 2006**

This report is dedicated to the memory of Norris Gaynor, 45, who was killed by three teens in Ft. Lauderdale in January of 2006; and the late Ed Bradley of CBS' 60 Minutes, who reported the very first national television story on hate crimes/violence against homeless people. The impact of the 10/1/06 broadcast has been felt nationwide with legislation adding homelessness to hate crimes statutes being introduced in California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Texas.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1982, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) was founded with one mission in mind: to end homelessness. NCH consists of a national network of currently and formerly homeless people, advocates, activists, and service providers who have worked tirelessly to fulfill this mission. Our vision of a society without homelessness has been the ultimate goal of attempts to pass comprehensive legislation, to satisfy the immediate needs of the homeless population and to raise awareness through public education.

Through the *Hate, Violence and Death on Main Street USA* report, the National Coalition for the Homeless brings attention to an issue that has been ignored in both government policy and the opinions and thoughts of the everyday American. We hope this report will educate the public to the inhumanities facing America's homeless population and ultimately end violence against people experiencing homelessness. In fact, our report has played a role in getting laws passed in Maine and California as well as influencing pending legislation in California, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada and Texas.

The Maine law gave judges the discretion of adding a few more years onto a person's sentence, and the California law mandated police officers to be trained about hate crimes against homeless people. If passed, the pending legislation will add homelessness as a protected class to their respective states' hate crimes laws.

Throughout our country's history, people of varying race, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation have been the victim of hate crimes. The justice system has worked to reduce these crimes through efforts to provide greater retribution to victims of hate crimes by further penalizing perpetrators and by discouraging potential attackers by imposing stricter punishment. Yet homeless victims have been denied this equal opportunity alongside other minority groups. Between 1999 and 2005 there have been 82 homicides classified as the result of hate crimes according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University San Bernardino. Over that same period there have been 169 deaths as a result of violent acts directed at homeless people. This is more than twice the amount of deaths than those resulted from categorized hate crimes.

The past eight years have witnessed 614 violent acts against homeless individuals. These attacks occurred in 200 cities throughout our country in 44 states and Puerto Rico. They know no boundary and are not limited to coast, region or state. These attacks have permeated every corner of our society, resulting in 189 deaths and 425 non-lethal attacks, ranging from beatings with golf clubs to setting a man on fire while sleeping. The victims have endured humiliations both great and small and the injuries they sustained created not only physical pain and scars, but the crippling effects of wounded self-esteem and dignity of the human spirit.

In 2006, headline after headline carried the same message, "Group of teens savagely beat homeless men." The data shows that the majority of crimes were committed by teens and youths as young as thirteen-years-old. Of the known attackers, 62% were youths between age thirteen and nineteen. An overwhelming 84% of the accused and convicted were 25 and under. The attackers repeatedly cited

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

their motive of attack as boredom, committing the crimes for the “thrill” or “fun,” because the victim is homeless, or perhaps even more harrowing, because they simply “can.” The victims of these violent crimes were for the most part innocent pawns in a game of fun for their attackers.

The *Hate, Violence and Death on Main Street USA* report seeks to ultimately create awareness. Too many homeless individuals have been made into victims of brutal and often deadly attacks, attacks motivated by one’s housing status and the simple thrill of harming someone. According to a 2006 study done by the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions, 18 percent of homeless people have experienced violence on the street. These atrocities are acts of hatred and should be classified as hate crimes. It is time that the victims of these violent acts are given due respect. The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005 does not address housing status, nor does the Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2005. The facts show that homeless people are a vulnerable population; as such they should be included in legislation protecting the most vulnerable classes of society. Moreover, since the homeless often reside in federally subsidized shelters, streets, and parks, the federal government has both unique authority and a jurisdictional justification to assure their protection when local authorities cannot. Additionally, housing-related issues have been an area of active federal enforcement for decades. Proactive measures must be taken to address violence against homeless people. We can no longer watch idly as the civil rights of homeless people are continually thrown aside.

Research and experience have shown the correlation between homeless-directed violence and city efforts to criminalize homelessness. Laws that violate the basic civil rights of homeless people justify violence toward them. Through the creation of societies where homeless individuals are seen as second-class citizens, we are fueling the dehumanization of homeless people. It is the responsibility of cities and of all governing bodies to ensure that the criminalization of the homeless is neither fostered nor encouraged in America’s cities.

The *Hate, Violence and Death on Main Street USA* report is the voice for the 189 men and women who lost their lives, for the 425 who managed to survive and for the countless number of victims and casualties that go unreported every year. Justice for homeless people should be granted to them; protection of their civil rights should be ensured; they should be protected by legislation that acknowledges the injustice of violence against them. By acknowledging this sickening trend, we can discourage America from continuing to ostracize our homeless citizens. We can work to return their sense of self worth and purpose. We can show they are not forgotten.

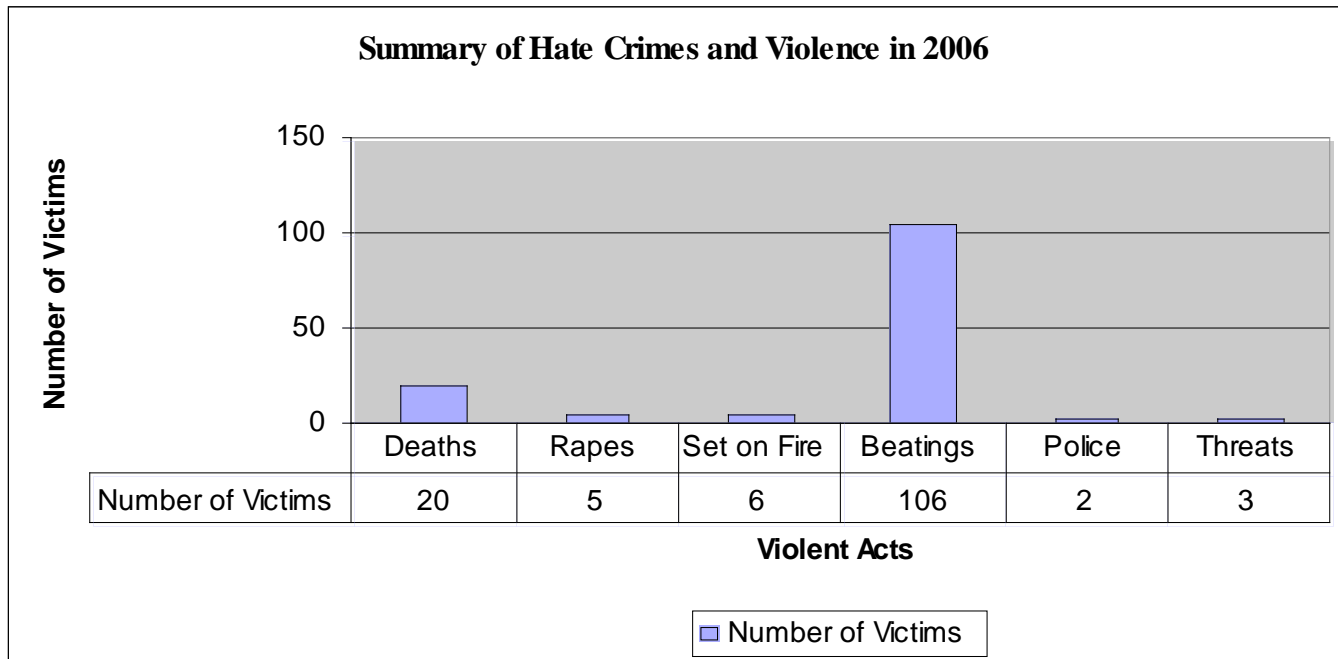
While NCH makes every effort to verify the facts regarding each incident used in our report, new information about cases sometimes becomes available after publication. NCH comprehensively researches and reviews all included data. As new, additional evidence emerges about the classification of prior, new or previously unknown cases, it is the policy of NCH to adjust our tabulations accordingly.

**Note that with the probable exception of the homicide and fire-setting figures, the overwhelming majority of the other victimizations tallied are likely to go unreported and are thus probably many times higher than the actual numbers presented here. Victimization studies show that certain victim classes, like homeless people, and certain kinds of victimizations, like assaults and rapes, are often not reported.*

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

SUMMARY OF HATE CRIMES AND VIOLENCE DATA IN 2006:



Total Number of Deaths: 20

Total Number of Rapes: 5

Total Number Non-Lethal Attacks including Setting on Fire: 6

Total Number of Non-Lethal Attacks including Beatings: 106

Total Number of Incidents involving Police Brutality: 2

Total Number of Threats/Intimidations: 3

Total Number of Lethal Attacks: 20

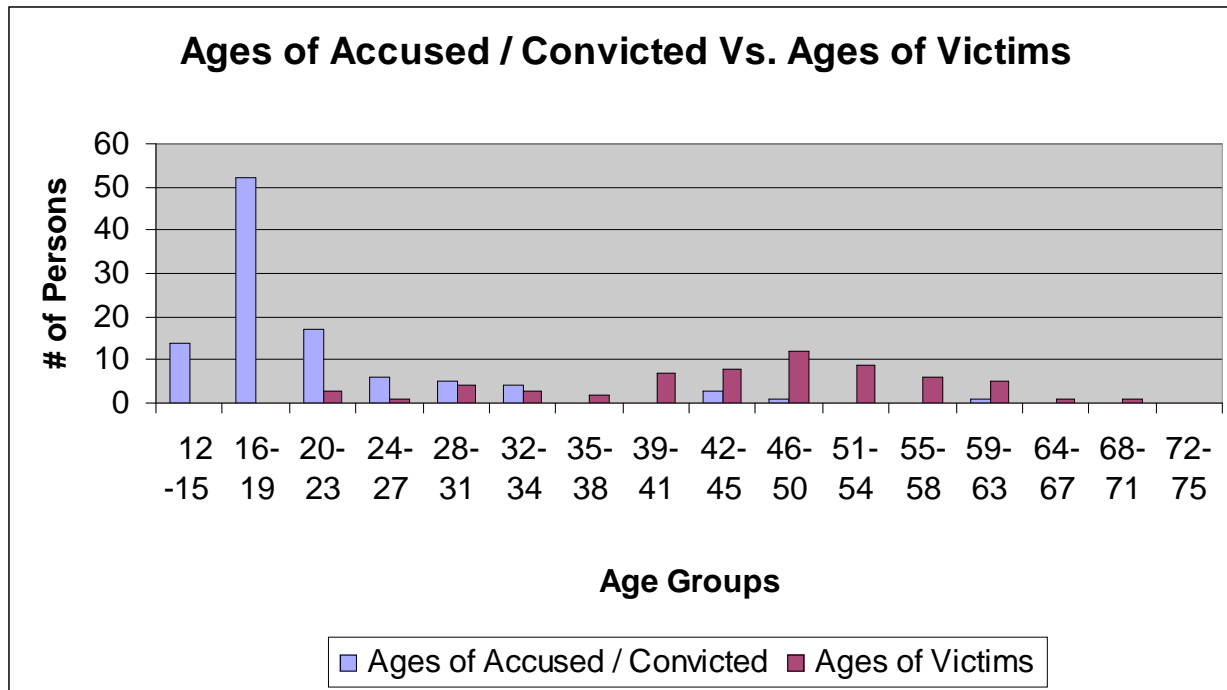
Total Number of Non-Lethal Attacks: 122

Total Number of Violent Acts in 2006: 142

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

SUMMARY OF HATE CRIMES AND VIOLENCE DATA IN 2006:



Age Ranges of the accused/ convicted: 13, 14 (five), 15 (eight), 16 (fifteen), 17 (fourteen), 18 (fourteen), 19 (nine), 20 (four), 21 (six), 22 (four), 23 (three), 24, 25 (five), 27 (two), 28 (three), 29, 30, 32, 33 (three), 34, 43, 44 (two), 50 and 59.

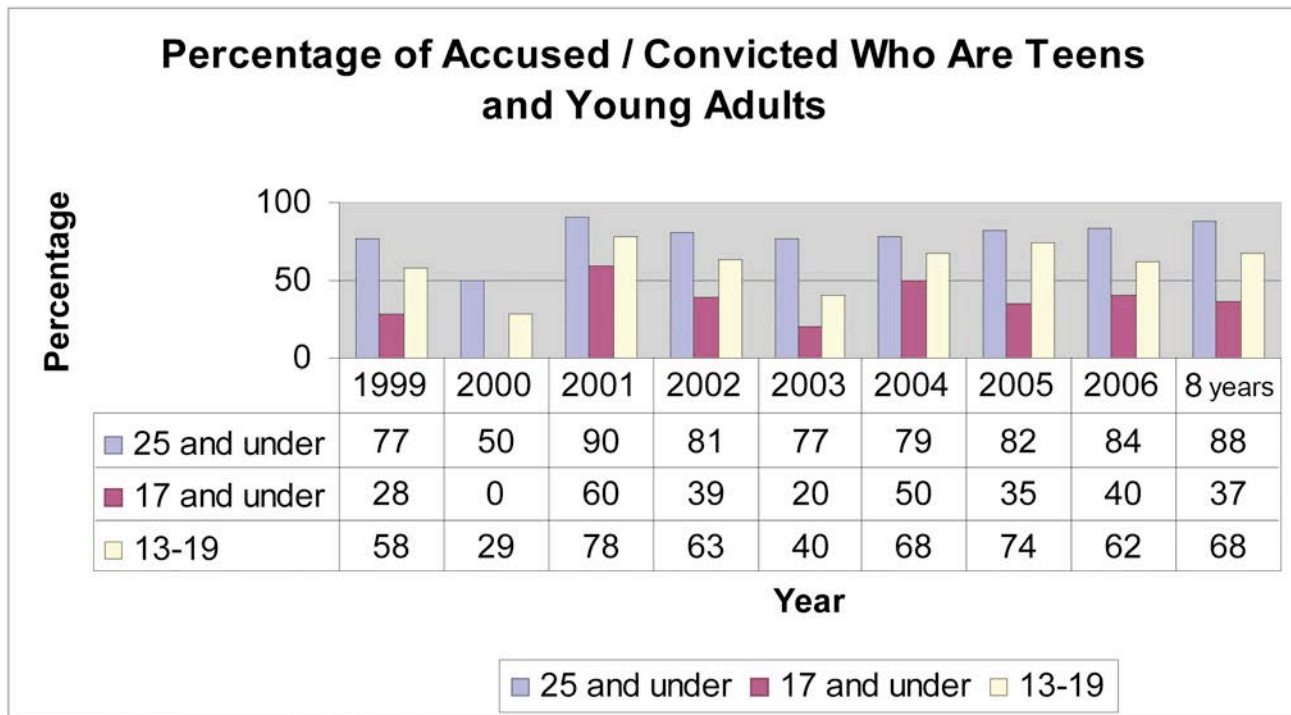
Age ranges of the victims in 2006: 21 (two), 22, 25, 28, 30 (two), 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39 (two), 41 (five), 42, 43 (two), 44, 45 (four), 46 (two), 47 (three), 48 (three), 49 (two), 50 (two), 51 (five), 52, 54 (three), 55, 56, 57, 58 (three), 60 (two), 62 (two), 63, 67 and 68

Gender of Victims: male: 98 female: 16

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

SUMMARY OF TEEN AND YOUNG ADULT INVOLVEMENT IN HATE CRIMES / VIOLENT ACTS OVER AN EIGHT YEAR PERIOD (1999-2006):

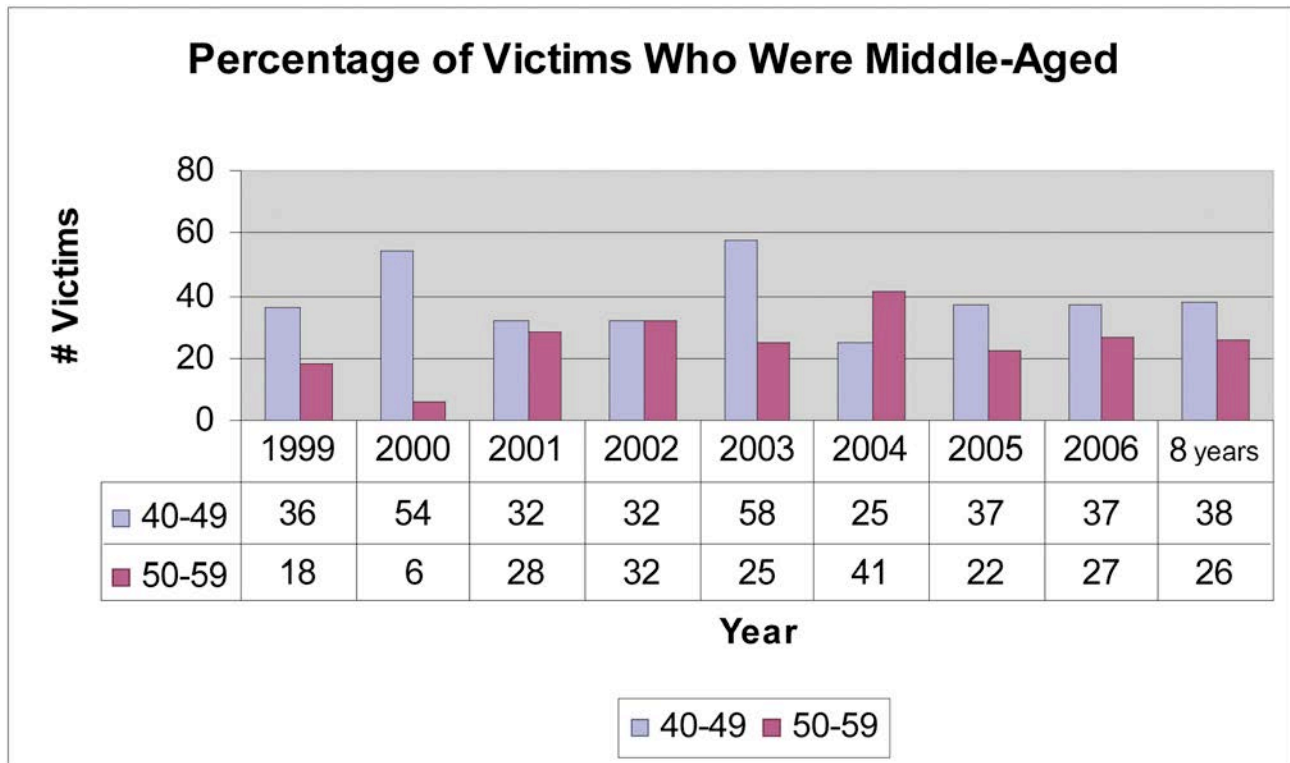


Age Ranges of the accused/ convicted: 13, 14 (five), 15 (eight), 16 (fifteen), 17 (fourteen), 18 (fourteen), 19 (nine), 20 (four), 21 (six), 22 (four), 23 (three), 24, 25 (five), 27 (two), 28 (three), 29, 30, 32, 33 (three), 34, 43, 44 (two), 50 and 59.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

SUMMARY OF VICTIMS WHO WERE MIDDLE-AGED:



Age ranges of the victims in 2006: 21 (two), 22, 25, 28, 30 (two), 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39 (two), 41 (five), 42, 43 (two), 44, 45 (four), 46 (two), 47 (three), 48 (three), 49 (two), 50 (two), 51 (five), 52, 54 (three), 55, 56, 57, 58 (three), 60 (two), 62 (two), 63, 67 and 68

Gender of Victims: male: 98 female: 16

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

CITIES/COUNTIES WHERE HATE CRIMES/VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN 2006:

Total Cities/Counties: 62

Akron, OH	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Aspen, CO	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Augusta, GA	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Bangor, ME	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Bedford, NH	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Boston, MA	2 separate incidents resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
Bradenton, FL	2 separate incidents resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
Buffalo, NY	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Bunnell, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Camden, NJ	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Charlotte County, FL	4 separate incidents resulting in 6 non-lethal acts
Colorado Springs, CO	1 incident resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
Cortez, CO	3 separate incidents resulting in 5 non-lethal acts
Corvallis, OR	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Deland, FL	5 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 6 non-lethal acts
Detroit, MI	1 incident resulting in 1 death
El Cerrito, CA	2 incidents resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
El Paso, TX	1 incident resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
Eureka, CA	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Fairfield, CA	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Fayetteville, NC	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Fort Lauderdale, FL	7 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 6 non-lethal acts
Fort Myers, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Gibsonton, FL	1 incident resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
Gold Beach, OR	1 incident resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
Huntsville, AL	4 separate incidents resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
Indio, CA	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Kalamazoo, MI	4 separate incidents resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
Kissimmee, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Lafayette, IN	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Lauderhill, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Little Rock, AR	2 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
Manatee County, FL	3 separate incidents resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
Manchester, NH	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Merritt Island, FL	3 separate incidents resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
Miami, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 death

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

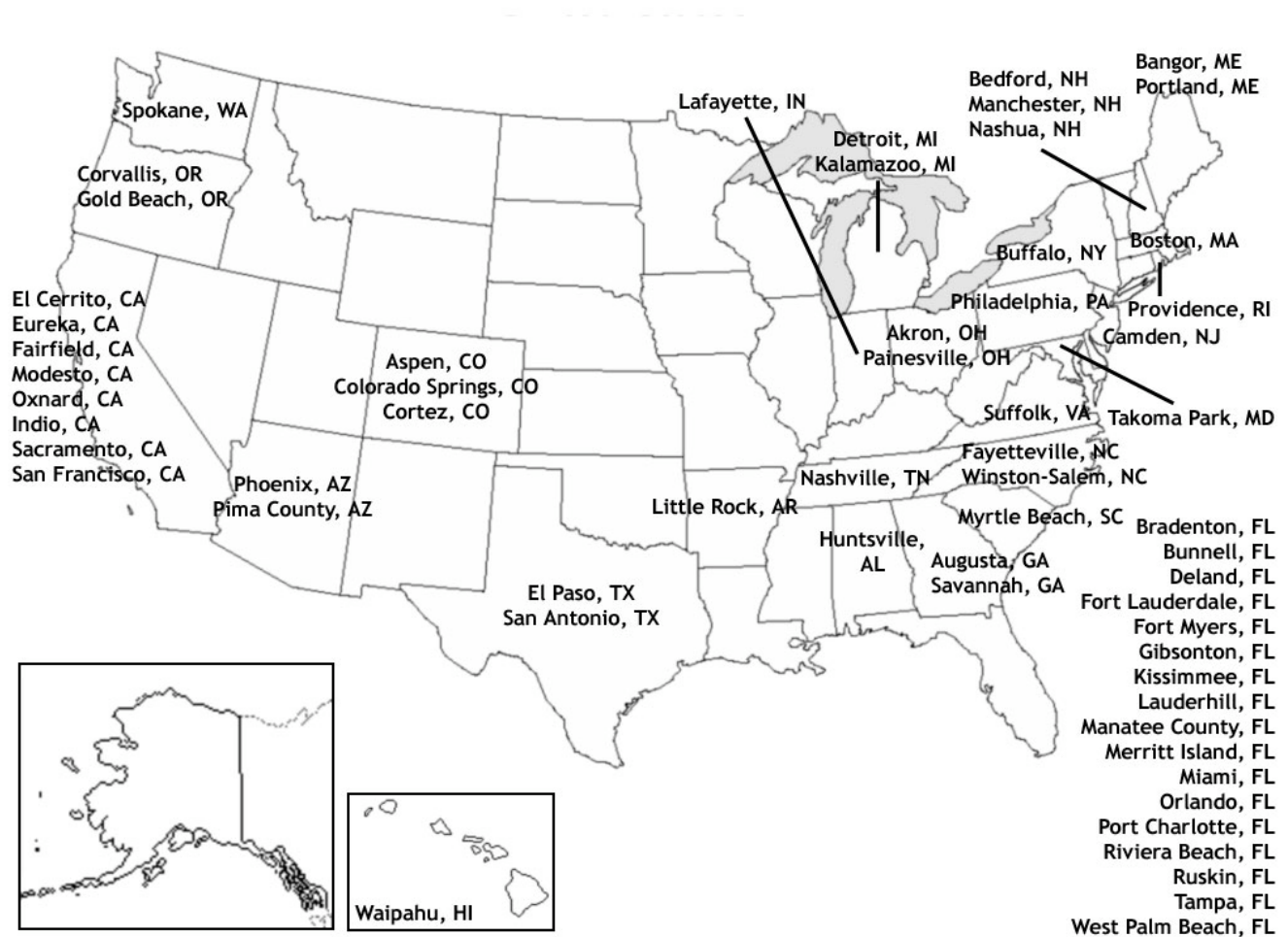
February 2007

Modesto, CA	2 separate incidents resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
Myrtle Beach, SC	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Nashua, NH	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Nashville, TN	1 incident resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
Orlando, FL	3 separate incidents resulting in 2 deaths and 1 non-lethal act
Oxnard, CA	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Painesville, OH	1 incident resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
Philadelphia, PA	2 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
Phoenix, AZ	16 separate incidents resulting in 2 deaths and 14 non-lethal acts
Pima County, AZ	1 incident
Port Charlotte, FL	3 separate incidents resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
Portland, ME	7 separate incidents resulting in 7 non-lethal acts
Providence, RI	5 separate incidents resulting in 5 non-lethal acts
Riviera Beach, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Ruskin, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Sacramento, CA	2 separate incidents resulting in 1 non-lethal act
San Antonio, TX	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
San Francisco, CA	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Savannah, GA	2 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
Spokane, WA	1 incident resulting in 1 death
Suffolk, VA	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Takoma Park, MD	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Tampa, FL	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
Waipahu, HI	1 incident resulting in 1 non-lethal act
West Palm Beach, FL	3 separate incidents resulting in 1 death and 2 non-lethal acts
Winston-Salem, NC	3 separate incidents resulting in 3 non-lethal acts

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

CITIES/COUNTIES WHERE HATE CRIMES/VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN 2006:



HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

STATES WHERE HATE CRIMES/VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN 2006:

Total Number of States: 26

AL	4 separate incidents in 1 city (Huntsville) resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
AZ	17 separate incidents in 2 cities (Phoenix and Pima County) resulting in 2 deaths and 14 non-lethal acts
AR	2 separate incidents in 1 city (Little Rock) resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
CA	11 separate incidents in 8 cities (El Cerrito, Eureka, Fairfield, Indio, Modesto, Oxnard, Sacramento, San Francisco) resulting in 2 deaths and 8 non-lethal acts
CO	6 separate incidents in 3 cities (Aspen, Colorado Springs, Cortez) resulting in 9 non-lethal acts
FL	42 separate incidents in 18 cities (Bradenton, Bunnell, Charlotte Co., Deland, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers, Gibsonton, Kissimmee, Lauderhill, Manatee Co., Merritt Island, Miami, Orlando, Port Charlotte, Riviera Beach, Ruskin, Tampa, West Palm Beach) resulting in 8 deaths and 40 non-lethal acts
GA	3 separate incidents in 2 cities (Augusta, Savannah) resulting in 1 death and 2 non-lethal acts.
HI	1 incident in 1 city (Waipahu) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
IN	1 incident in 1 city (Lafayette) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
ME	8 separate incidents in 2 cities (Bangor, Portland) resulting in 1 death and 7 non-lethal acts
MD	1 incident in 1 city (Takoma Park) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
MA	2 separate incidents in 1 city (Boston) resulting in 2 non-lethal acts
MI	5 separate incidents in 2 cities (Detroit, Kalamazoo) incident resulting in 1 death and 4 non-lethal acts
NH	3 separate incidents in 3 cities (Bedford, Manchester, Nashua) resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
NJ	1 incident in 1 city (Camden) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
NY	1 incident in 1 city (Buffalo) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
NC	4 separate incidents in 2 cities (Fayetteville, Winston-Salem) resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
OH	2 separate incidents in 2 cities (Akron, Painesville) resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
OR	2 separate incidents in 2 cities (Corvallis, Gold Beach) resulting in 4 non-lethal acts
PA	2 separate incidents in 1 city (Philadelphia) resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act
RI	5 separate incidents in 1 city (Providence) resulting in 5 non-lethal acts
SC	1 incident in 1 city (Myrtle Beach) resulting in 1 death
TN	1 incident in 1 city (Nashville) resulting in 1 death and 1 non-lethal act

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

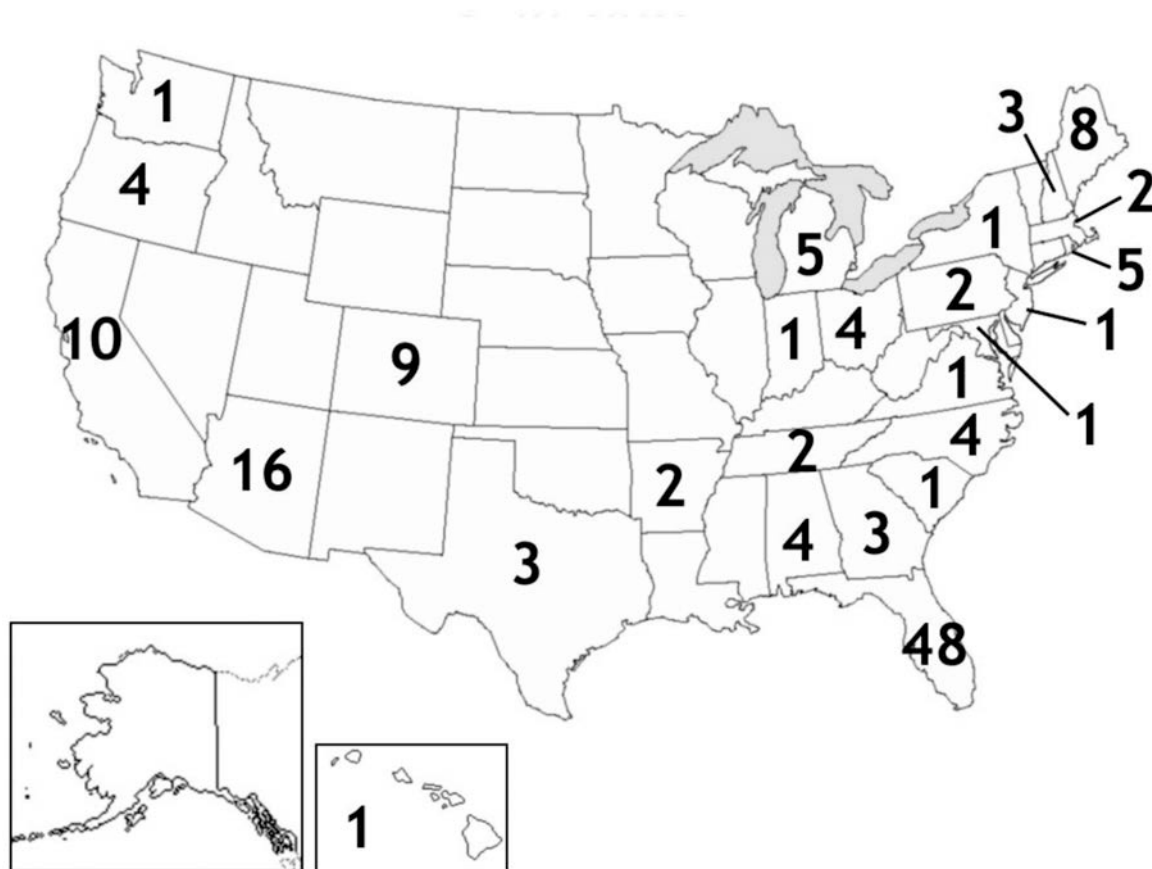
February 2007

- TX** 2 separate incidents in 2 cities (El Paso, San Antonio) resulting in 3 non-lethal acts
- VA** 1 incident in 1 city (Suffolk) resulting in 1 non-lethal act
- WA** 1 incident in 1 city (Spokane) resulting in 1 death.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS AND NON-LETHAL ACTS IN 2006:

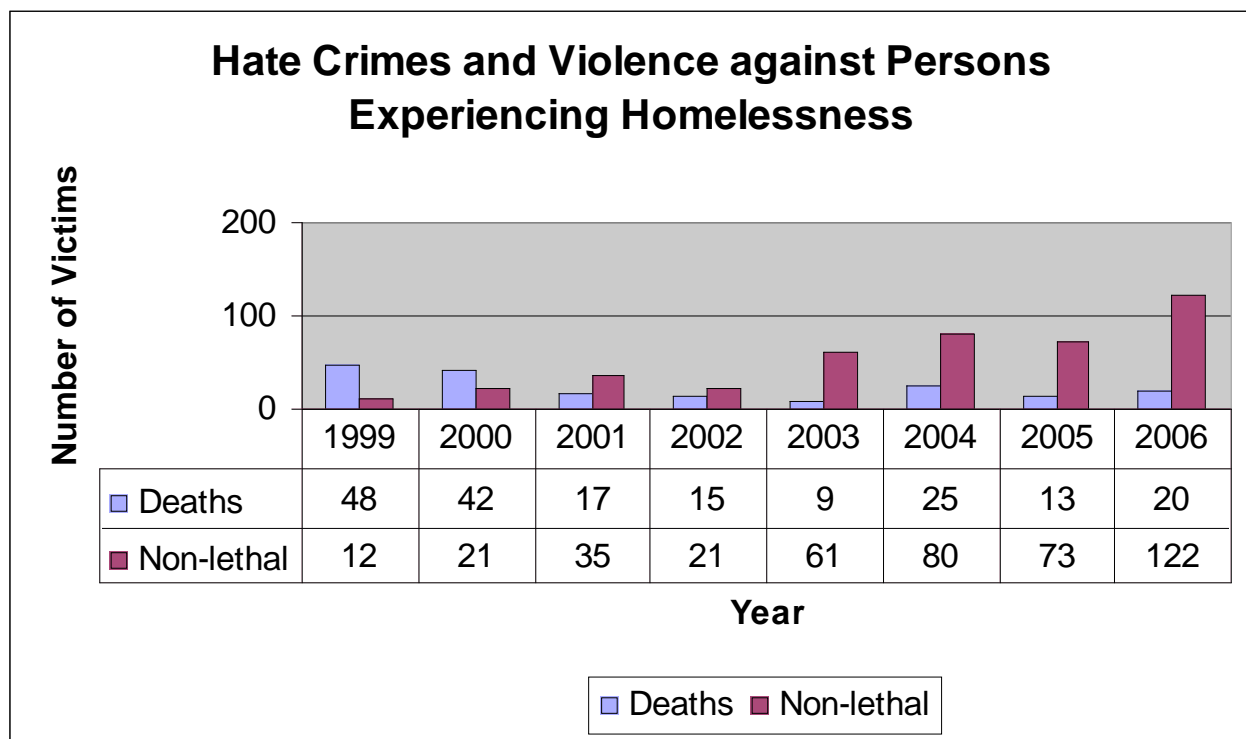


Total States: 26

Alabama	4	New Hampshire	3
Arizona	16	New Jersey	1
Arkansas	2	New York	1
California	10	North Carolina	4
Colorado	9	Ohio	4
Florida	48	Oregon	4
Georgia	3	Pennsylvania	2
Hawaii	1	Rhode Island	5
Indiana	1	South Carolina	1
Maine	8	Tennessee	2
Maryland	1	Texas	3
Massachusetts	2	Virginia	1
Michigan	5	Washington	1

HATE CRIMES/VIOLENCE DATA OVER AN EIGHT YEAR PERIOD (1999-2006):

Advocates, homeless shelter workers, and the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) all began to recognize that reports of hate crimes and violent acts against people experiencing homelessness were increasing with frequency and brutality. As a result, in 1999, the NCH began publishing annual reports documenting hate crimes and violent attacks against people experiencing homelessness. These annual reports have not only served to document the number of deaths and non-lethal attacks, but have included the individual stories of the victims of these crimes. This annual study makes evident the great number of crimes as well as the large geographic area in which they occur.



Total number of violent acts of 8 years: 614

Total number of deaths over 8 years: 189

Total number of non-lethal attacks over 8 years: 425

Total Number of cities where crimes occurred over 8 year: 200

Total number of states where crimes occurred over 8 years: 44 plus Puerto Rico

Age range of the accused/convicted: 11 to 75 years of age

Age range of the victims: 4 months old to 74 years of age

Gender of victims: male: 359 female: 48

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

COMPARISON OF HATE CRIME HOMICIDES vs. FATAL ATTACKS ON HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS 1999-2005

	Homicides Classified as Hate Crimes (FBI Data)	Fatal Attacks on Homeless Individuals (NCH Data)
1999	17 (9 racially, 2 religiously, 3 sexual orientation, 3 ethnically motivated)	48
2000	19 (10 racially, 1 religiously, 2 sexual orientation, 6 ethnically motivated)	42
2001	10 (4 racially, 1 sexual orientation, 5 ethnically motivated)	17
2002	11 (4 racially, 1 religiously, 4 sexual orientation, 2 ethnically motivated)	15
2003	14 (5 racially, 6 sexual orientation, 2 ethnically, 1 anti-disability motivated)	9
2004	5 (3 racially, 1 religiously, 1 sexual orientation motivated)	25
2005	6 (3 racially, 3 ethnically motivated)	13
7 Year Total	82	169

Chart compiled using data from the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism
(California State University, San Bernardino): Analysis of Data from National
Coalition for the Homeless & FBI

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

HATE CRIMES SURVEY RESPONSES:

In 2006, NCH created a Survey on Hate Crimes and Violence. The survey was designed to gauge public opinion on the prevalence of violence against persons experiencing homelessness, public knowledge of homeless-directed violence, as well as solutions to this growing epidemic of violence against our nation's homeless population. Via the NCH website, we received over 1,000 unsolicited responses. The results are summarized below.

1. Are you aware of the advocacy work by the National Coalition for the Homeless on the hate crimes/violence against homeless persons issue?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes.		51.5%	499
No.		43.6%	422
Other (please specify)		4.9%	47
Total Respondents			968
(skipped this question)			40

2. Have you read the most recent annual report (2005) on the hate crimes/violence against homeless persons issue available on the National Coalition for the Homeless' website (www.nationalhomeless.org)?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes.		23.7%	223
No.		73.3%	689
Other (please specify)		3%	28
Total Respondents			940
(skipped this question)			68

3. The videotaped, unprovoked beating of homeless persons by teenagers in Fort Lauderdale and San Francisco earlier this year disturbed me greatly.			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Strongly Agree. It is an outrage. We must send a clear message that we won't allow such terrible incidents to happen in our community.		79.5%	735
Somewhat Agree. It bothered me a little, but I haven't thought much about it since hearing the news.		5.6%	52
Disagree. The news didn't really make a big impression on me.		1.2%	11
I didn't hear the news.		13.7%	127
Total Respondents			925
(skipped this question)			83

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

4. Nationwide, attacks on homeless persons nearly doubled from 1999 to 2005. To what do you attribute this rise in attacks?

	Response Percent	Response Total
Boredom (crime of opportunity with a belief that no consequence would follow)	55.1%	498
Copycat crime motivated by news and/or video of similar incidences	31.5%	285
Politically or socially motivated "hate crime"	42.7%	386
Racially motivated action	21.9%	198
Other (please specify)	28.2%	255
Total Respondents		904
(skipped this question)		104

(Below is a sampling of additional responses)

“Multiple reasons: lack of education of those committing the crimes themselves, mental illness and/or socio-economic struggles of those committing these crimes (contributing to general anger), and certainly hidden discriminatory perspective due to lack of exposure and empathy to/for the struggles of the homeless.”

“Class discrimination. As a homeless person, myself, I have [seen] people without a ‘home’ being categorized into a class similar to the ‘untouchables’ in India. Society looks down at the ‘homeless’ as the lowest of the low; below the level of humanity.”

“I think it is a combination of boredom and social or political motivations. I also think it is because we call them Homeless, which is the lowest of the low as far as the class war goes. Everyone is feeling a pinch financially, some more than others, now we have a bigger gap between the rich and poor the homeless are the easy targets for the desperate misled people of today.”

“In our culture, there is an exploding lack of respect for homeless persons and a great stigmatization of such people experiencing homelessness. Videos such as “Bumfights,” etc. contribute to enflaming the hateful culture and giving kids ideas that it’s okay and funny to do.”

“Here in Huntington [WV] there [are] constant news articles about the poor and homeless. Most are negative and do not tell the whole story of how a person cannot live in the over-priced housing at \$5.15 an hour. The newspapers make us out to below-life bums, alcoholic

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

drug addicts, lazy and that we should be punished into submission. The message they send to John Q. public is that we are sub-human therefore our lives mean nothing so we may be harassed and beat and even killed as was the case with Gerald Bird on the Ohio River a few years ago.”


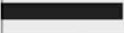




“I think our environment has become more apathetic. When you condone violence and murder in any way, it makes it more acceptable in every way. We are at war, and children, who were ten when it started, are now fourteen, those who were twelve are now sixteen. Our children have been immersed in real violence, unlike the threat of violence from the cold war. Adults are condoning and justifying violence, publicly. Violence to the extreme of systematic torture. Without outrage from the community for the violence that occurs, we make it clear that those actions are not offensive. Our silence gives tacit approval, but our actions are setting the example.”






“I think it is a crime of opportunity w/ the belief that no consequences will follow, but I don’t think it’s due to boredom. I think it’s an adrenaline run, a rush, a way to appear tough” - maybe gang-like - a big crime with small consequence. Minimal damage to society - damage against persons, society doesn’t pay much attention to, at least not positive attention.”

“There are always going to be people who will want to compensate for their own feelings of inferiority or sense of failure by attacking innocent people who make easy targets. The “copycat” effect, together with the political scapegoating (politicians and others blaming economic ills, taxes, etc. on alleged abuse of publicly funded services) provide a background that seems to sanction violence to the ignorant. There is also a realization that homeless people fear the police and aren’t as likely to report an attack. That perception is valid, because homeless people really do fear the police for good reason. And yes, since so many who are homeless are people of color, it’s hard to separate the attacks on the homeless per se, and attacks racially motivated.”

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

5. What is the best solution to the growing problem of violence against homeless persons?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Provide more round-the-clock shelters		12.2%	106
Add homelessness to the state hate crimes statute		14.1%	122
Provide more affordable housing for all people		38.7%	335
Create stiffer penalties for anyone convicted of assaulting a homeless person		10.3%	89
Set up local "Faces of Homelessness Speakers Bureaus," made up of homeless and formerly homeless persons, who educate the community about issues affecting homeless persons		15%	130
Institute crime prevention strategies like organizing homeless persons and volunteers to form community watch/"orange hat" patrols, especially after an incident occurs		9.7%	84
Total Respondents			866
(skipped this question)			142

6. Teenagers convicted of unprovoked beatings of homeless persons should face adult penalties.			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Strongly agree		47.2%	420
Agree somewhat		33.5%	298
Disagree somewhat		10.3%	92
Strongly disagree		5.7%	51
No opinion		3.3%	29
Total Respondents			890
(skipped this question)			118

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

7. In your opinion, what should the National Coalition for the Homeless and other organizations who work with homeless persons do to address this growing problem?	
Total Respondents	771
(skipped this question)	237

(Below is a sampling of responses)

“We should have more educational programs about homelessness, in addition to initiatives that directly combat the problem of homelessness (more affordable housing, health care, better public education, etc).”

“Kids need to be educated about homelessness and that homeless people are human beings with dignity and worth just like human beings with homes.”




“It would also be advantageous for those who are caught and convicted to have a mandatory service in which they interact with the homeless.”

“Advocacy is so important. Most people don’t even know that violence against homeless people is an issue. Getting the word out so that more people are aware of this problem can be the first step in finding a solution that all Americans will support.”

“Educate the homeless on the dangers of not staying at a shelter overnight and the importance of doing so.”

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

8. Would you support efforts by the National Coalition for the Homeless to add homelessness to the hate crimes statute in your state in order to create stronger penalties for those convicted of violence against homeless persons?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Yes		76.7%	660
No		7.2%	62
Maybe (please explain)		16%	138
Total Respondents			860
(skipped this question)			148

(Below is a sampling of responses)

“I am concerned that hate crimes legislation targets certain beliefs. I prefer changing people’s hateful beliefs through education-focused strategies.”

“Let’s address the conditions that create crime, not lock people in cages for their actions.”

“We need to approach the problem with education, community service, etc. Harsher penalties are not the answer.”

“I’m extremely concerned about the number of people currently incarcerated in this country. So I would prefer to focus efforts on community awareness. I believe most of the crimes against the homeless are just crimes of opportunity. Once the word spreads that community watch organizations are patrolling the area, this behavior will reduce.”

“I don’t think that increased penalties are really deterrents. We need to change perceptions.”

9. Please make any other comments here.

	Total Respondents	327
	(skipped this question)	681

(Below is a sampling of responses)

“Minors who knowingly break laws that harm other individuals, animals, or property should face STIFF punishment and reform. The internet is the information highway. Kids KNOW the ins and outs of what will happen to them if they commit crimes and don’t fear any consequences when they know a slap on the wrist and community service is all that comes from it. They also know that their juvenile records do not carry forward into adult life. Lots of these kids could care less because they never learned to care about anything.”

“I think working together goes further than continual legislation and enforcements of law. Hate crimes are awful, but I don’t want to add fuel to the fire. “An eye for an eye” does not solve the issue. Continual efforts and awareness and support are what work the best.”

“Sadly, hate crimes most often arise out of ignorance. If we don’t make a concerted effort to first educate people about homelessness and its causes, then the violence against the homeless will continue somewhat unabated. The threat of imprisonment through “hate crime” legislation doesn’t seem to deter the ignorant all that much.”

“I work for an agency which provides emergency, temporary shelter for the homeless. I have found through my experience that being homeless is rarely the only challenge facing our guests. There is usually a combination of factors affecting their ability to maintain both housing and employment. These factors include psychological/psychiatric issues, physical difficulties, substance abuse problems, and lack of education needed to obtain employment providing a living wage. We do our best to provide linkage to the services our guests require, unfortunately funding is a major obstacle.”

“Again, I truly do not think that these crimes are hate crimes in the real sense of the term. The homeless are simply easy targets, people that do not seem to matter much. Most people do not give the homeless enough thought to harbor any real hatred towards them; at most, I think people see the homeless as drains on society and examples of personal failure. They may look down upon them, or see them as less than human, but they do not hate them. The perpetrators should certainly face punishment, perhaps even stiffer punishments than are now given, just not under the classification of hate crimes.”

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

“I think this survey was a great idea and I hope that it really helps. Personally I cannot understand why a human being would do something so terrible to another human being. In Spokane, Washington we just had a homeless man set on fire. They believe they have the suspect in custody and are going to charge him with first degree murder because the gentleman died in the hospital after being set on fire. I personally felt that this was something that the news should have been covering more than they did. Thank you again for making this survey.”

“I am not sure these crimes are completely preventable--homeless people are unfortunately often vulnerable. I do know that the changes must begin as a societal change, as societal misconceptions exacerbate and fuel these events. I am not sure that more shelters would prevent the problem--perhaps BETTER shelters might help, more affordable housing, and better execution of services could offer some relief. But the idea that it is ok to harm a homeless person--just because they are homeless--comes from a societal breakdown as a whole.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

The National Coalition for the Homeless recommends that the following actions be taken:

1. A **public statement** by the U.S. Department of Justice acknowledging that hate crimes and/or violence against people experiencing homelessness is a serious national trend.
2. The U.S. Department of Justice would **issue guidelines** for local police on how to investigate and work with people experiencing homelessness based on recommendations from the National Coalition for the Homeless. The U.S. Department of Justice would recommend improvements to state law on how to better protect against violence directed against people experiencing homelessness, including tougher penalties.
3. With the assistance of the National Coalition for the Homeless and criminal justice professionals, **add “housing status” information to the checklist of data** maintained as part of the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) maintained by the FBI. Similar efforts should be undertaken by state UCR agencies.
4. **Inclusion of housing status** in the pending state and federal hate crimes legislation. Federal bills introduced during the 109th Congress (2005-2006) included the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2005 (H.R. 2662 in the U.S. House of Representatives; S.1145 in the U.S. Senate--109th Congress). Neither bill passed, they are expected to be reintroduced in 2007.
5. **Awareness training** at police academies and departments nationwide for trainees and police officers on how to deal effectively and humanely with people experiencing homelessness in their communities.
6. **Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Bureaus** (made up of homeless and formerly homeless people) become established in communities around the country. Speakers would visit both public and private schools in the community for the purposes of information and education. For more help and technical assistance in establishing a Faces of Homelessness Speakers’ Bureau in your community, contact Michael O’Neill, Project Director, at: Ph. (202) 462-4822 x20; Email: moneill@nationalhomeless.org, or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces>

7. A **U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) study** into the nature and scope of hate crimes and/or violent acts and crimes that occur against people experiencing homelessness. This proposed study will address the following:
 - Causes of hate crimes/violence.
 - Circumstances that contribute to or were responsible for the perpetrators' behavior.
 - Beliefs held by the perpetrators of these crimes and how their beliefs have changed since conviction.
 - Thoughts and advice from the perpetrators to others who are considering hate crimes/violence against the homeless population.
 - Community education, prevention and law enforcement strategies.

MODEL STATE LEGISLATION

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) and National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)

Note: With hate crimes/violence against homeless people escalating, the NLCHP and NCH are asking local advocates/service providers to have legislation introduced in your respective State Legislatures. Below is a model piece of legislation that we recommend.

Only two states (California and Maine) have passed pieces of this proposed model legislation. No state has added homelessness to its hate crimes statute. Legislation is pending in California (S.B. 122), Florida (H.B. 11 and S.B. 1458), Maryland (S.B. 160), Massachusetts (H.B. 1419), Nevada (A.B. 83), and Texas (S.B. 536 and H.B. 1360).

For help and advice in getting this model legislation introduced in your state legislature, please contact: Tulin Ozdeger, Civil Rights Attorney, NLCHP

Ph: (202) 638-2535 x212;

Email: tozdeger@nlchp.org

And/Or

Michael Stoops, Acting Executive Director, NCH

Ph: (202) 462-4822 x19;

Email: mstoops@nationalhomeless.org

If you succeed in getting legislation introduced, please let us know right away.

We can mobilize our grassroots members in your state to assist in the lobbying efforts:

Model State Legislation - Hate Crimes/Violence against Homeless People

Whereas, hate crimes and violence against homeless persons has become a nationwide epidemic, with 614 reported cases of violence against homeless people over the past 8 years, resulting in 189 deaths;

Whereas, the scope of prohibitions against the commission of hate crimes against certain groups of persons should include homeless persons;

Whereas, understanding violent crimes committed against homeless persons and adequate punishment for such crimes play key roles in preventing and managing violence against homeless persons; and

Whereas, law enforcement needs proper training to handle and prevent violent crimes against homeless persons;

Be it enacted:

- (1) Definition of Homeless Person – For purposes of this section, “homeless person” refers to an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:
 - (a) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
 - (b) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, including motels, hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing; or
 - (c) Housing of other persons in which the individual is temporarily staying due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
- (2) The state hate crimes statute shall be expanded to include homeless persons as a protected class.
- (3) Prohibition on Hate Crimes against Homeless Persons – The following acts shall be deemed a hate crime and prohibited when carried out against a person on the basis that person’s status as a homeless person:
 - (a) Assault, aggravated assault, battery, or aggravated battery upon the person; or
 - (b) Acts that deface, damage, or destroy or attempt to deface, damage, or destroy the personal property of the person; or
 - (c) Acts that result in the death of the person; or
 - (d) Any other crime against the person.
- (4) Punishments for Hate Crimes Against Homeless Persons –
 - (a) A person convicted of aggravated assault or aggravated battery upon a homeless person based on the victim’s status as a homeless person shall be sentenced to a minimum term of 3 years and fined not more than \$10,000. The person shall be ordered by the sentencing judge to make any restitution to the victim of the offense and to perform 500 hours of community service work. Restitution and community service work shall be in addition to any fine or sentence that may be imposed and shall not be in lieu thereof.

- (b) Whenever a person is charged with committing an assault or aggravated assault or a battery or aggravated battery upon a homeless person based on the victim's status as a homeless person, the offense for which the person is charged shall be reclassified as follows:
 - (i) In the case of aggravated battery, from a felony of the second degree to a felony of the first degree.
 - (ii) In the case of aggravated assault, from a felony of the third degree to a felony of the second degree.
 - (iii) In the case of battery, from a misdemeanor of the first degree to a felony of the third degree.
 - (iv) In the case of assault, from a misdemeanor of the second degree to a misdemeanor of the first degree.
- (5) State Office of the Attorney General Study -
 - (a) The Office of the Attorney General shall assess the extent of the problem of crimes against homeless persons and develop a plan to prevent these crimes and apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes.
 - (b) In developing the assessment and plan, the Office of the Attorney General shall consult homeless persons, service providers and advocates for homeless persons and law enforcement agencies with experience investigating crimes against homeless persons.
- (6) Law Enforcement Training on Hate Crimes against Homeless Persons –
 - (a) The lead state law enforcement agency shall develop a telecourse that shall be made available to all law enforcement agencies in the state. Every state, local, and correctional law enforcement agency shall certify that each of its officers has taken the course. The telecourse shall address crimes against homeless persons and methods of dealing effectively and humanely with homeless persons. The course shall include instruction on each of the following topics:
 - (i) Information about homelessness, including causes of homelessness, its impact, and solutions to homelessness.
 - (ii) Indicators of hate crimes.

- (iii) The impact of these crimes on the victim, the victim's family, and the community.
 - (iv) The assistance and compensation available to victims.
 - (v) The laws dealing with hate crimes and the legal rights of, and the remedies available to, victims of hate crimes.
 - (vi) Law enforcement procedures, reporting, and documentation of hate crimes.
 - (vii) Techniques and methods to handle incidents of hate crimes.
 - (viii) The special problems inherent in hates crimes against homeless persons and techniques on how to deal with these special problems.
- (b) The lead state law enforcement agency shall develop a protocol that law enforcement personnel are required to follow, including, but not limited, to the following:
- (i) Preventing likely hate crimes by, among other things, establishing contact with persons and communities that are likely targets, and forming and cooperating with community hate crime prevention and response networks.
 - (ii) Responding to reports of hate crimes, including reports of hate crimes committed under color of legal authority.
 - (iii) Providing victim assistance and follow up, including community follow up.
 - (iv) Reporting methods and procedures to track hate crimes against homeless persons.
- (c) In developing the telecourse, the lead state law enforcement agency shall consult subject matter experts including, but not limited to, the following:
- (i) homeless and formerly homeless individuals;
 - (ii) the National Coalition for the Homeless and National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty;
 - (iii) other service providers and advocates for homeless people;

- (iv) experts on the disabilities homeless persons commonly experience;
and
- (v) law enforcement agencies with experience investigating hate crimes
against homeless people.

MODEL LEGISLATIVE/ORGANIZING/PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORTS IN CALIFORNIA, & MAINE:

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATION

Reports done by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the California Department of Justice about hate crimes against homeless people prompted the California State Legislature to take action.

Senate Bill 1234, which was introduced in February of 2004 by State Senator Kuehl, became public law in September of the same year and went into effect in July of 2005. It is now California Penal Code 13519.64.

This law requires the Commission on Peace Officer Standards to develop a two-hour telecourse to be made available to all law enforcement agencies in California on crimes against homeless people and how to deal effectively and humanely with homeless people, including those with disabilities. The telecourse is to include information on multi-mission criminal extremism, which includes crimes committed in whole or in part because of the victims' actual or perceived homelessness. In developing the telecourse, the commission is to consult subject-matter experts including, but not limited to, homeless and formerly homeless persons in California, service providers and advocates for homeless people in California, experts on the disabilities that homeless people commonly suffer from, the California Council of Churches, the National Coalition for the Homeless, the Senate Office of Research, and the Criminal Justice Statistics Center of the California Department of Justice.

In January of 2007, S.B. 122 was introduced in the California State Senate. The bill adds "homeless status" to the list of characteristics qualified under existing hate crime statute.

MAINE LEGISLATION

An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Attorney General's Working Group Regarding Sentencing Factors for Crimes against Persons Who Are Homeless

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 17-A MRSA §1151, sub-§8, ¶B, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 149, §1, is amended to read:

B. The selection by the defendant of the person against whom the crime was committed or of the property that was damaged or otherwise affected by the crime because of the race, color, religion, sex, ancestry, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or homelessness of that person or of the owner or occupant of that property.

SUMMARY

This law implements the recommendations of the Attorney General's working group regarding the advisability of implementing aggravating sentencing factors for crimes against persons who are homeless, which was established pursuant to Public Law 2005, chapter 393. The law amends the purpose section of the general sentencing provisions of the Maine Criminal Code by adding homelessness to the list of factors, such as the age, religion and sexual orientation of a victim that a court considers in determining the gravity of an offense in sentencing.

MAINE'S CAMPAIGN TO END HATE VIOLENCE AGAINST HOMELESS PEOPLE

For over three years, Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice (HVJ), a social change organization led by people who have first-hand experience of living in homelessness, has undertaken a campaign to publicly address the problem of hate violence against homeless people. We have had significant success in our long-term efforts to bring public attention and legislative action to the cause of better protecting homeless people from the plague of anti-homeless violence. We believe that our organizing may have already helped to reduce this violence in our state, and we hope that Maine can lead the way for all Americans to show that we will not accept hate violence against the homeless in our communities.

Our first success in the Maine Legislature, 2005's "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Crimes Against Homeless People," mandated statewide training for local police on homelessness and homeless people's barriers to accessing the police. Our organization now regularly conducts this training at the State Police Academy and has trained or consulted on this training for local police departments. The 2005 law also required the Attorney General's Office to work with the police on better response to crimes against the homeless. We have participated actively in that work, and are awaiting the AG's report and recommendations to the Legislature on that issue in early 2007.

This past year we achieved a hard-fought and even more significant legislative victory. In the spring of 2006, Maine passed first-in-the-nation legislation to add homelessness to the categories of crime victims that may be considered as an aggravating factor in sentencing. This new law, titled "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Attorney General's Working Group Regarding Sentencing Factors for Crimes against Persons Who Are Homeless," was signed by Governor John Baldacci at a public event held in the Preble Street soup kitchen. While other states have mandated police training on homelessness, Maine is the first to pass a law that directly impacts the sentencing of crimes committed against homeless people. This new law significantly improves protection for Maine's homeless people *now*. It is also a critical step toward our long-term goal of having homelessness included as a fully protected category under Maine's Civil Rights Act (our state's hate crimes law).

Our long-term organizing campaign to stop the hate violence has included a wide variety of actions in addition to legislation:

Presentations at local high schools and area colleges; statewide presentations to community organizations and social action groups; a large community march and press conference in Portland to oppose this violence, co-organized by Portland High School students; presentations and collection of information at homeless shelters around the state; collaboration with the Center for Prevention of Hate Violence at the University of Southern Maine; working with homeless people and the police to improve communication and develop more victim-friendly reporting procedures, trying to break the "trust" barrier; a continuing

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

successful effort to confront media stereotyping of the homeless community that encourages bias.

Early on in this campaign, we learned about the video series and web site called “Bumfights,” which has been cited as a source of inspiration for groups of youth to attack homeless people. In 2003 and 2004, we heard from local high school students and police about a group of youth calling themselves the “Bum Fighting Krew” (a name taken directly from these films), which may have been responsible for some of the Portland attacks at that time. We provided background information to *60 Minutes* and facilitated meetings between one of their producers and both homeless victims and high school students here in Portland, in preparation for the news program they aired about “Bumfights” in the fall of 2006. We persuaded Maine video store owners to remove the “Bumfights” films from their shelves. We also sent letters to prominent national retail chains who continued to sell the video on their websites - in some cases even after previous commitments to the National Coalition for the Homeless and other organizations that they would stop selling them. This effort has resulted in at least one positive response so far when Target Corporation committed to remove their website’s links to sales of this video and to improve efforts to “prevent such postings” by their online business partners.

Unfortunately, we continue to learn of other movies, video games, and messages in popular media which promote the actions and attitude represented in “Bumfights.” In March 2006, we staged a highly publicized protest at a local cinema which was screening the popular film, “Date Movie,” in which a couple yell “Bumfights!” and attack a homeless man for laughs. We organized in protest of a similar “joke” on a popular Maine radio station in June 2006, spurring a public outcry which led the station to apologize and to donate public service announcements (PSAs) and other air time (including on-air interviews with Homeless Voices for Justice leaders) to oppose anti-homeless hate violence. With input from HVJ, station programming staff produced PSAs about the importance of treating homeless people with dignity, and these have now been aired by several local stations owned by the same company (Citadel Broadcasting), reaching an estimated 60,000 listeners.

Our ultimate goal is to end homelessness, and we work on many ongoing initiatives to address the causes of homelessness and to expand housing opportunities. Meanwhile, it is important to recognize the frightening treatment of homeless people in our society and to work to make homeless people's day-to-day lives less dangerous.

LISTING OF INCIDENTS BY CITY:

- Akron, OH** pg.67
- Aspen, CO** pg.75
- Augusta, GA** pg.58
- Bangor, ME** pg.48
- Bedford, NH** pg.65
- Boston, MA** pg.56
- Bradenton, FL** pg.61, 70
- Buffalo, NY** pg.63
- Bunnell, FL** pg.53
- Camden, NJ** pg.63
- Charlotte County, FL** pg.66
- Colorado Springs, CO** pg.62
- Cortez, CO** pg.73
- Corvallis, OR** pg.72
- Deland, FL** pg.51, 57, 63, 65
- Detroit, MI** pg.49
- El Cerrito, CA** pg.71
- El Paso, TX** pg.65
- Eureka, CA** pg.48
- Fairfield, CA** pg.64
- Fayetteville, NC** pg.55
- Fort Lauderdale, FL** pg.47, 58, 67, 70, 74
- Fort Myers, FL** pg.60
- Gibsonton, FL** pg.74
- Gold Beach, OR** pg.64
- Huntsville, AL** pg.68
- Indio, CA** pg.69
- Kalamazoo, MI** pg.66, 70
- Kissimmee, FL** pg.69
- Lafayette, IN** pg.54
- Lauderhill, FL** pg.73
- Little Rock, AR** pg.50, 73
- Manatee County, FL** pg.57, 72
- Manchester, NH** pg.64
- Merritt Island, FL** pg.69
- Miami, FL** pg.52
- Modesto, CA** pg.71
- Myrtle Beach, SC** pg.48
- Nashua, NH** pg.54
- Nashville, TN** pg.51
- Orlando, FL** pg.49, 62
- Oxnard, CA** pg.52
- Painesville, OH** pg.71
- Philadelphia, PA** pg.49, 71
- Phoenix, AZ** pg.51, 68
- Pima County, AZ** pg.56
- Port Charlotte, FL** pg.60
- Portland, ME** pg.61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 72
- Providence, RI** pg.67, 68
- Riviera Beach, FL** pg.59
- Ruskin, FL** pg.50
- Sacramento, CA** pg.59
- San Antonio, TX** pg.59
- San Francisco, CA** pg.60
- Savannah, GA** pg.52, 61
- Spokane, WA** pg.50, 57
- Suffolk, VA** pg.67
- Takoma Park, MD** pg.75
- Tampa, FL** pg.72
- Waipahu, HI** pg.55
- West Palm Beach, FL** pg.47, 54, 59
- Winston-Salem, NC** pg.76

CASE DESCRIPTIONS OF LETHAL ATTACKS BY MONTH, DATE, AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL DEATHS: 20

JANUARY

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Beating caught on tape

January 12: Three homeless men in Fort Lauderdale were brutally beaten with baseball bats and sticks in the early hours of the morning. The two surviving victims include Jacques Pierre, 58, and Raymond Perez, 49; both were listed in critical condition for several days and were recovering from several broken bones, cuts, and bruises. The third victim, Norris Gaynor, 45, suffered similar injuries and died of head trauma and internal bleeding within hours of arriving at the hospital.

A video surveillance camera captured the inhumane pummeling of Pierre, which led to the arrests of William Ammons, 18, Brian Hooks, 18 and Thomas Daugherty, 17. The chilling footage shows a defenseless Pierre struggling to escape while enduring unmerciful blows to his head and body from two of the teens wielding baseball bats and smiling, taking apparent pleasure in this act of absolute hatred.

In late July, Ammons' lawyer asked that his client be let out of jail. His client, he said, was not "doing well" in prison. Ammons was allegedly present for all three attacks and actively took part in one of them, but not the attack that killed Norris Gaynor.

On January 5th, 2007, prosecutors in the case announced that the death penalty would not be sought for Hooks or Ammons. The third defendant, Thomas Daugherty, is not eligible for the death penalty because he is under 18.

West Palm Beach, Florida

Homeless man killed 19 minutes after calling 911

January 21: Moses Prophet, a 58-year-old homeless man, called 911 from a pay phone saying that a man had threatened to kill him. The 911 call came after Rashid Jackson, 21, pulled a gun on Prophet during an argument and then walked away. Minutes later, Jackson found Prophet and continued the argument, which ended in the shooting of Prophet. The two men knew each other and had previous altercations, however it is unclear what caused this particular incident.

According to friends, Prophet was a retired carpenter who chose to live on the street as a vagabond, despite having money in the bank.

Rashid Jackson was arrested and charged for the shooting and killing of Prophet.

MARCH

Eureka, California

Two teens charged as adults in murder of homeless man

March: Keyontae Lamar Taylor, 15, and Joaquin Fitzgerald, 16, are being charged as adults for the murder of Tracy Daniel Reynolds. The teens shot Reynolds in the leg and in the chest.

According to authorities, the teens encountered Reynolds along railroad tracks. They drank some beers together and then the boys left. They allegedly returned a short time later when they robbed Reynolds and shot him.

Bangor, Maine

Man burned to death: Hate crime suspected.

March 7: In a highly publicized case, the burning body of a deceased man was discovered under a bridge in Bangor. The body was identified later as Trevor Sprague, a 34-year-old homeless man. In April after an autopsy and further investigation, his death was ruled a homicide.

There is suspicion that this could have been a hate crime. It should be noted that other homeless people believed that Trevor was gay, and media reports speculated that either his homelessness or sexual orientation could have been reasons for him to be targeted. No further information on the investigation has been released and no charges have been brought in the case.

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Homeless man dies after beating

March 23: 16 year-old Bilal Harris and a 14-year-old, whose identity is being withheld, stalked a homeless man and beat him to death in a wooded area behind a former veterinary clinic.

The unidentified assailant pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was committed to a juvenile detention center. Harris is being charged as an adult in the murder. Authorities say the victim Steven G. Walsh is between the ages of 45 and 50 and was beaten as the two teens attacked him with bottles, rocks and an unidentified object ultimately fracturing his skull.

Detroit, Michigan

Fifteen year old boy charged with homeless man's death

March 26: Braymond Harris, a 21-year-old homeless man, was shot in the head by a 15-year-old boy. Harris had fled during an altercation with three or four teenagers but was pursued by the 15-year-old who fatally shot him with a small-caliber gun in a McDonald's parking lot.

"I wish there was a motive like robbery," said Police Homicide Sgt. Michael Martel. "At least I could understand it. But they just wanted to beat up a bum."

The boy has been charged as a juvenile for first-degree murder and for using a firearm while committing a felony.

Orlando, Florida

Man found beaten by five teenagers

March 26: August Felix, 54, was found dead after having been severely kicked, punched and beaten with an unknown blunt object. Felix was living near railroad tracks when a group of teenagers attacked him for fun. Other homeless individuals were also attacked, but Felix was the only resultant death. Five teenagers were arrested on charges of second-degree murder. Three of the assailants were 13 years old and the remaining two were 16 years old. They will likely be tried as adults.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Teens allegedly kill man after he 'mooned' them

March 29: Martin Malone, 47, was taunted as he rummaged through a trash bin and was then killed after he showed his buttocks to his attackers.

Christopher McEneaney, 16, and Andre Mark, 18, were charged in the slaying of Malone. He was stabbed with a multi-tool and bludgeoned with a shovel.

MAY

Orlando, Florida.

Homeless man slain while going to work

May 27: Ronald "Gumby" Klaas, a 51-year-old homeless man, was shot in the head and leg. According to police, Klaas was walking to the bus terminal Sunday morning headed for work when he was slain. His body was later found outside of a Bank of America building in downtown Orlando.

Those who knew him described Gumby, a nickname inspired by missing teeth, as a sweet man. He had been a fixture in the community for the past 20 years. Homeless by choice, he lived in a local shelter and worked long hours in theme-park kitchens.

The suspect is believed to be a young man, 17 years of age, about 5 feet, 6 inches and weighing 115 pounds. He was riding a blue, child-sized bike.

JUNE

Spokane, WA

Handicapped homeless man set afire

June 23: According to police, a wheelchair-bound homeless man was killed as a result of extensive burns he suffered after being set afire in downtown Spokane. Douglas R. Dawson, 50, was flown to the city's trauma and burn center in critical condition. He later passed away.

Dawson, who only had one leg, was well known in the area by police officers that patrol downtown. The attacker, Matthew Brian Trammell, 22, was believed to be involved in a robbery earlier that day in the area with Sean Paul Knold, 23. When the robbery was reported, Officer Dean Draper, who was nearby, saw the two men coming from the area where the fire had been reported. It is believed that Knold was not involved in the arson attack. Trammell was charged with first-degree murder.

JULY

Little Rock, Arkansas

Homeless man dies after fatal attack

July 23: William Wesley, 46 years old, was found unconscious in the front yard of a Little Rock home, the result of being severely beaten with a stick. Wesley later died from an infection due to the attack.

The attacker, 18-year-old Jonathon Brown, was charged with first-degree battery. Medical records are pending examination to determine if charges against Brown should be upgraded to murder.

Ruskin, Florida

Homeless woman beaten to death

July 26: 33-year old registered sex offender Oscar Wesley Smith has been accused of beating Lynn Poelvoorde-Smith (no relation), 46, to death. Witnesses say Oscar Wesley

Smith flagged down a passing motorist to help him with Poelvoorde-Smith's body which he claimed to have found. Poelvoorde-Smith was found beaten to death with a claw hammer, laying in the fetal position. Hair and blood found on a near-by hammer matched those of Poelvoorde-Smith. Oscar Wesley Smith denied owning the hammer, but a co-worker reported seeing it in his truck the day before the murder.

Oscar Wesley Smith was charged with first-degree murder and is being held without bail.

AUGUST

Phoenix, Arizona

Two men arrested for a series of crimes against the homeless

August 5: Police arrested Dale S. Hausner, 33, and Samuel J. Deiteman, 30, in suspicion of two counts of first-degree murder and 14 counts of attempted first degree murder. The two are suspected in shootings that killed six and wounded 18 homeless people, in addition to fires started at two Wal-Mart stores over the past year.

According to a resident of the area, Deiteman described his involvement in the crimes as "RV", random acts of recreational violence. The men have been under surveillance by the police until enough evidence had been collected for their arrest.

Nashville, Tennessee

Homeless women pushed into river while sleeping

August 11: Tara Cole, a 32-year-old homeless woman, was killed when she was pushed off the edge of the dock where she slept into the nearby river. Two men, Timothy Webber, 21, and Josh Dotts, 22, were charged August 24 with criminal homicide.

The men also attacked Jesse Masters, another local homeless man who witnessed the incident and jumped in to save Cole when he was hit in the face by a bottle of beer thrown at him. Dotts and Webber were also charged with aggravated assault for the attack on Masters. Cole's body was recovered from the river on August 21, ten days after her murder.

Deland, Florida

Police searching for suspects in homeless beating

August 18: Police are searching for suspects involved in the brutal beating of a 43-year-old homeless man identified as Scott Dugrenier, an Army veteran. Dugrenier suffered severe head injuries and was taken to the hospital for treatment. He clung to his life for more than two weeks after a savage beating left him comatose. He died after his family agreed to remove him from life support.

Adam Colando, the head of the Students' Coalition to End Homelessness at Stetson University, visited Scott in the hospital after his attack. Adam wrote, "I kept looking at his eyes with the hope they might move or some sign that he could hear us. No response at all. I watched the breathing machine inflate his lungs and it would hold them inflated for a second or two and then deflate... This has really hit home, since I see and work with these individuals on a weekly basis. The homelessness community is just like you and me, except they have more challenges to deal with, like mental and physical issues. I also feel that some of these individuals just make bad decisions and choices."

SEPTEMBER

Miami, Florida

Four friends arrested for beating homeless man to death

September 2: 67-year-old Jose Perez died from injuries sustained during a brutal attack. The beating began after Jose yelled a pick up-line to Janice Guillen, 18, who then punched Perez. When Perez retaliated, Guillen's boyfriend, Magdiel Wingfield, 28 and their friends Jason Cardenas, 19, and Kevin Stone, 27, rushed to the scene where the four friends proceeded to attack Perez with chairs, steel rebar and other objects.

Miami police spokesman Lt. Bill Schwartz described the attack as "pure blood lust", claiming "there was no reason for this." All four have been charged with second-degree murder.

Savannah, Georgia

Homeless man shot and killed by teen

September 24: 51-year old Harold Boney was shot in Wells Park. 17-year-old Joseph "Jo Jo" Grantham told police he and two friends went to the park to "harass or beat up" a homeless man who frequented the park. However, when Boney made movement toward the boys, Grantham fired. The bullet entered Boney's shoulder and pierced his heart. Grantham claims he did not know the gun was loaded and only wanted to scare Boney away. Savannah police officials say there is enough evidence for a murder indictment. The two boys accompanying Grantham have not been charged but are still considered suspects.

Oxnard, California

Homeless man beaten to death

September 30: Pablo Chavez Garcia, 25, is suspected of beating to death Pedro Lopez Ortiz, 41. Police suspect Garcia beat Ortiz with a blunt object after finding him sleeping behind the bushes in his front yard when returning home with his wife. Ortiz was taken to a local medical center where he later died.

A judge set bail at more than \$1.2 million for Garcia, who has several prior misdemeanors. Garcia pled not guilty and remains in custody under a bail of more than \$1 million.

NOVEMBER

Bunnell, Florida

Two arrested in death of homeless man

November 11: Shane Linkows, 23, and Michael Blair, 43, have been arrested on murder charges following the discovery of a 41-year-old homeless man's body. The sheriff reports that the body was found near railroad tracks, and is said to have been there since August. Police have not released the connection between the homeless man and those arrested.

CASE DESCRIPTION OF RAPES BY MONTH, DATE AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL RAPES: 5

JANUARY

West Palm Beach, Florida

Homeless woman raped

January 24: A homeless woman was forced into the woods and raped by a group of men.

FEBRUARY

Nashua, New Hampshire

Man charged with assaulting homeless woman

February 14: Richard Wharton, 50, was charged with the kidnapping and rape of a 46-year-old homeless woman.

Wharton met his victim at a homeless shelter and the two became friends. He invited her to move into his apartment, and she accepted. While living there, Wharton made numerous sexual advances and assaulted her on several occasions.

According to police the victim was physically and emotionally frail and unable to defend herself. Wharton made threats that he had access to a gun and would hurt her if she told anyone what happened.

SEPTEMBER

Lafayette, Indiana

Homeless woman held captive and raped

September 9: Early Saturday morning, a 28-year-old homeless woman reportedly offered to help a drunken man home. On arriving at his house, the woman was then held captive by the man, Jeffery E. Akard, 32, a Purdue University student. The woman claims she was held for about 15 hours during which time she was shocked with a stun gun and raped repeatedly. Akard let the woman go at about 5:00 pm after she woke up and pretended not to remember anything. She immediately ran to another home and called the police.

Upon investigating the house, officers found a .357 Magnum and pellet gun, a small amount of marijuana, physical evidence related to the rape accusations, and also found several thousand child pornography images on the Akard's computer. Akard was arrested on Sunday for preliminary charges of rape, confinement, possession of child pornography, and marijuana possession.

Waipahu, Hawaii

Homeless Woman Raped, Assaulted

September 13: Marina Bisquera claims she was brutally attacked and raped by a young man. Bisquera was napping under the bridge where she lived when she was awoken by the attack. She tried to flee but was unsuccessful. A 22-year-old man has been arrested in connection with the crime.

OCTOBER

Fayetteville, North Carolina

Homeless women held captive and raped

October 24: Floyd Lee Cahoon, 44, is being charged with a first-degree sex offense, kidnapping and assault inflicting serious bodily damage. A homeless woman told police that Cahoon picked her up on the road and took her to what he claims was his home and office. Cahoon had already been charged for raping and kidnapping a woman one week earlier.

CASE DESCRIPTION VIOLENT ATTACKS/SETTING ON FIRE BY MONTH, DATE AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL ATTACKS: 6

MARCH

Boston, Massachusetts

Homeless man kicked, set on fire in park

March 6: Scott Capella, 30, woke to two men calling him a “homeless bum.” He ignored them and drifted back to sleep, but the men returned. This time, Capella was awakened by a kick in the back. Capella stated, “I tried to sit up and I was grabbed by one and pushed to the ground... that’s when the other one threw gasoline on me.” Capella suffered second-degree burns on his left leg below the knee and may need skin grafts.

“I was screaming... I could feel my skin melting. I just kicked off my shoes and shucked off my pants. Oh, it hurt.”

Earlier that evening, Capella brought his girlfriend to a shelter. Unable to find a place for himself, he resolved to sleep in Langone Park. He has been homeless for three years and is described as a gentle soul.

The suspects have not been caught but are believed to be males of approximately 30 years.

Pima County, Arizona

Man tells police he set house afire to drive off transients

March 29: Daniel Lewis Purcell, 59, was charged with possession of burglary tools, second-degree burglary, criminal damage, and arson after entering a vacant home and setting it on fire. “His reasoning was due to the fact that he and neighbors were tired of the transient drug users that were using the residence as a flop house.”

Nobody was injured in the fire.

APRIL

Deland, Florida

Ten teens attack a homeless man, four teens charged in beating of homeless men

April 12: John Smith said that he was attacked by a group of ten teens in early April. His tent was doused with lighter fluid and set on fire. His friend suffered a broken nose. The ten teens attacked John Smith with metal pipes in the woods behind a Winn Dixie store.

JUNE

Spokane, WA

Handicapped homeless man set afire

June 23: According to police, a wheelchair-bound homeless man was killed as a result of extensive burns he suffered after being set afire in downtown Spokane. Douglas R. Dawson, 50, was flown to the city's trauma and burn center in critical condition. He later passed away.

Dawson, who only had one leg, was well known in the area by police officers that patrol downtown. The attacker, Matthew Brian Trammell, 22, was believed to be involved in a robbery earlier that day in the area with Sean Paul Knold, 23. When the robbery was reported, Officer Dean Draper, who was nearby, saw the two men coming from the area where the fire had been reported. It is believed that Knold was not involved in the arson attack. Trammell was charged with first-degree murder.

OCTOBER

Manatee Co., Florida

Teens harass homeless men

October 3: Two teenagers harassed a group of homeless men, throwing full bottles of water at them as they slept. They then threatened to burn down their camp. At night the two teenagers returned wearing boxing gloves and demanded a fight, but were scared off by the men.

CASE DESCRIPTION OF VIOLENT ATTACKS/BEATINGS BY MONTH, DATE AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL ATTACKS: 106

JANUARY

Augusta, Georgia

Homeless man attacked and robbed by two teens

January 1: Two teens, Juwan Scruggs, 17, and Damarcus Dent, 18, were charged with the beating and robbery of a homeless man, Joe Whitt, 51.

Whitt reported that the teens attacked him, and then stole his pocket radio and earphones. They demanded his money and attacked him with a board and a brick after he told them that he had none. Scruggs and Dent threatened to return with a gun. A nearby witness helped Mr. Whitt to safety. Officials found the attackers nearby.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Beating caught on tape

January 12: Three homeless men in Fort Lauderdale were brutally beaten with baseball bats and sticks in the early hours of the morning. The two surviving victims include Jacques Pierre, 58, and Raymond Perez, 49; both were listed in critical condition for several days and were recovering from several broken bones, cuts, and bruises. The third victim, Norris Gaynor, 45, suffered similar injuries and died of head trauma and internal bleeding within hours of arriving at the hospital.

A video surveillance camera captured the inhumane pummeling of Pierre, which led to the arrests of William Ammons, 18, Brian Hooks, 18 and Thomas Daugherty, 17. The chilling footage shows a defenseless Pierre struggling to escape while enduring unmerciful blows to his head and body from two of the teens wielding baseball bats and smiling, taking apparent pleasure in this act of absolute hatred.

In late July, Ammons' lawyer asked that his client be let out of jail. His client, he said, was not "doing well" in prison. Ammons was allegedly present for all three attacks and actively took part in one of them, but not the attack that killed Norris Gaynor.

On January 5th, 2007, prosecutors in the case announced that the death penalty would not be sought for Hooks or Ammons. The third defendant, Thomas Daugherty, is not eligible for the death penalty because he is under 18.

Sacramento, California

Two men sought in beating of homeless man

January 15: Police are searching for two men suspected of severely beating a homeless man in downtown Sacramento.

Two men attacked the victim, John Jewett, while a third acted as a look out. The beating occurred around 3:00 a.m. when the victim was awoken and struck several times in the face with a three-inch thick pipe. Jewett recognized the attackers from a previous attack several weeks earlier. Jewett's injuries required 14 stitches.

Police believe that these men beat another homeless man the same way last October.

West Palm Beach, Florida

Man beaten by and robbed

January 30: David Beckett, a homeless man who holds a steady job but does not make enough to get off the street, was recently beaten and robbed. Beckett claims he was blindsided by several different men, who stomped on his leg causing the cartilage to tear and leaving it severely sprained.

FEBRUARY

Riviera Beach, Florida

Homeless man beaten by three teens

Feb 7: Thomas Kotowski, 36, was severely beaten by three teens while trying to use a pay phone. One of the teenagers, Brandon Wright, 17, has been charged with attempted murder. According to a witness, Kotowski attempted to use a pay phone, which Wright denied him because he was waiting for a call. Kotowski slapped Wright's hand, which was returned by a punch from Wright to Kotowski's face. Kotowski then threw a beer bottle at the teen and Wright retaliated by hitting Kotowski twice in the face with a brick.

Two other teens took part in the beating but charges have not yet been brought against them.

San Antonio, Texas

Homeless woman beaten with tire iron

February 24: A 62-year-old homeless woman known to locals as Eloise was severely beaten around 1:00 a.m. by a man with a tire iron. The beating came after this woman rejected his demands for sex.

Despite her serious injuries, she was able to walk to a convenience store to ask for help. A responding officer described her face as being “pulverized”. She was brought to Brooke Army Medical Center where she was listed in critical condition.

Fort Myers, Florida

Homeless man beaten at bowling alley

February 25: Tyler Edwards and Jeffery Osterling, both 21, were arrested for beating Richard Hagar, a homeless man. Authorities said the two were kicked out of a bowling alley for starting fights inside. Once they were outside, they began beating Hagar.

Hagar’s eyes were swollen shut and he had numerous lacerations.

MARCH

San Francisco, California

Caught on Video: Three sought in homeless beating

March 7: Around 4:30 in the morning, a security camera outside of Ed Jew’s florist shop captured the beating of a sleeping homeless man. It appears that the three suspects attacked this man simply for thrills.

Authorities are not releasing any information about the victim because the suspects remain at large. The extent of his injuries is unknown because he has not checked into any medical centers. Jew states that he has allowed this man to sleep in the doorway of his shop for six months.

The suspects are believed to be three males ranging from 22 to 28, each weighing approximately 130 pounds and standing between approximately 5 feet, 5 to 8 inches.

Port Charlotte, Florida

Homeless man is victim of drive-by abuse

March 15: Paul Williams, 48, is a victim of numerous drive-by attacks. A bar of soap was hurled at him in the first attack but it did not hit him. In the second attack, Williams was struck in the back with a large rock as he was talking to a couple sitting on a bench. The rock left a bruise six inches long and nearly just as wide. After the rock hit, a 48-ounce can of juice was thrown at another group of homeless people sitting in the grass down the street. Another reported seeing eggs thrown as well.

This is the third reported attack against homeless people within the past month.

Nothing is known about the suspects other than that they were driving a red car.

Bradenton, Florida

Homeless man beaten, policeman fired for responding improperly

March 22: A homeless man, soaking wet and bleeding, walked into a convenience store seeking a clerk's help. He told the clerk that a group of teens had pelted him with rocks and pushed him into a nearby creek. The police officer who responded that night, Joshua Betts, 22, did not take the man's complaint seriously. He did not write an immediate report, and as a result, has been fired. According to police reports, Betts claimed to have searched for the teens after leaving the store, but signed out for his dinner break a minute into the search. An officer for three years, Betts was fired for dereliction of duty, unsatisfactory performance, and conduct that casts doubt on honesty.

Betts claims that there was no "just cause" for his termination. "I was not evasive and told the complete and honest truth," Betts said in his grievance against the police department.

Betts failed to write up a report the night of the attack, even though there was clear evidence of aggravated battery; a serious felony. Instead, he labeled the 911 call a "suspicious circumstance." When tracked down about two weeks after the attack, Raczkowski said that Betts was sarcastic and not interested in his story. A formal report was not filed until two days after the attack. Police say they do not doubt Raczkowski's claims that he was attacked.

Savannah, Georgia

Homeless man saved after being pushed in Savannah River

March 29: Everett Oliver, 42, was found clinging to a concrete piling in the middle of the Savannah River. He spent an hour in the water before being rescued. He suffered from hypothermia, as the air temperature was in the 30s and the water temperature was 52 degrees.

Oliver told police that three men approached him and asked for directions to the Marriott, which he refused to give to them. After he refused, they became angry and pushed him into the river.

APRIL

Portland, Maine

Man attacked by youths

Early April: A man identified only as "Jim" described an incident that occurred on his way to the Milestone shelter. While walking, he was "sucker punched" by "some young kid" (possibly teens or early twenties). He noticed a group of youth nearby. Leaving the scene of the attack, he continued to Milestone, where he was bleeding too much for them to accept him. The man was sent to the emergency room, where he received stitches.

Orlando, Florida

Two teens and an adult charged with attempted murder of homeless man

April 8: Wilmer Alvarado, 44, Jose Salazar, 19, and Jose Barbosa, 16, were charged with the attempted murder of Lionel Rivera, an Orlando homeless man.

Rivera says he was awoken by the men's voices as they lit his shelter on fire in the woods behind a Kmart. The attack was spurred by an argument over pay for construction work. Rivera escaped without injury.

Alvarado and Salazar were being held without bail, and Barbosa was sent to a Juvenile Assessment Center.

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Three homeless men beaten

April 8: Three homeless men were brutally beaten as they camped in below freezing weather. The men were attacked by an unknown number of assailants using their fists and rocks to beat the men. Two of the victims walked to a nearby hospital, reporting head injuries, punctured lungs and broken bones. They were admitted to the intensive care unit and listed in serious condition.

Portland, Maine

Homeless man attacked by passengers in car

April 8: A Portland resident submitted an account to police of an incident that she and other car passengers witnessed while driving through Deering Oaks.

A homeless man known as Mike had been panhandling with friends when two men in a vehicle at a red light motioned in a friendly way for him to approach the car. The man in the back seat then proceeded to lean out of the car where he "grabbed him by the collar, slammed his head and body against [the side of the] car and shoved him to the ground, all the while yelling." The witness' written account continued: "The victim collapsed on the ground, then got up, grabbed his head with both hands, flipped his hood up, and ran off..." Mike later confirmed the incident to members of Preble Street Homeless Voices for Justice, but was never willing to discuss the incident with police.

Portland, Maine

Homeless man held down and attacked

April 8-9: A man reported witnessing a crime against a local homeless man known as Jack. A group of teens held down the homeless man so that a female youth could hit him. He stated that this happened on Cumberland Avenue near the People's Free Space building. Jack refused to accept help.

Deland, Florida

Ten teens attack a homeless man, four teens charged in beating of homeless men

April 12: George Ray Turnbow, Jr., 17, Anthony Russel Baublitz, 18, and two unidentified 16 year-old girls are facing charges including aggravated battery, being a principle to aggravated battery, and attempted robbery.

Officials say the two girls lured two homeless men into a secluded area where Baublitz and Turnbow were waiting. The group robbed and attacked the men, hitting them with a steel pipe. Police were able to identify one of the victims as James Smith.

Baublitz was sentenced in September to 37 ½ months in prison for attempted robbery and battery. In November, Turnbow pleaded no contest and was sentenced to two years in prison followed by four years probation.

Buffalo, New York.

Beating critically injures homeless man

April 15: Andrew Dinsmore, 43, was attacked by a gang that bashed his head with a jagged piece of concrete and their fists. They tore off his pants, underwear, and jacket, and then left him to die. Dinsmore was brought to a medical center where he remained in stable but critical condition.

“His entire face is cut up. It’s just totally senseless beating,” said Daniel, the victim’s brother. Assailants have not been caught.

Deland, Florida

Four teens held in beating of homeless man

April 19: Phillip Tarbell, 56, was walking west on Voorhis Ave. in the afternoon when five teens, aged 13 to 16 began following him. The group lobbed a four-inch piece of cinderblock at his head. His face was fractured and he can no longer see out of his left eye. “There was so much blood,” Tarbell remarked, “I thought I was going to die.”

“The message is that homeless in Deland are vulnerable,” said Linda Brown, director of a church mission.

Camden, New Jersey

Police hunt for suspect

April 24: Police are on the hunt for a suspect who attacked a young homeless man. The victim tells police that a man shot him in front of a minivan with no motive. The victim was then rushed to a Trauma Center. Police are searching for the shooter.

Portland, Maine

Homeless man attacked by men

April 29-30: On May 3rd, a man known as Paul came to Preble Street with an eye injury. There was a noticeable red mark in the white of his eye. He told staff that over the weekend three twenty-something men in a truck with New Hampshire plates came out to Thompson's Point and were throwing and breaking glass bottles. A confrontation began, resulting in them assaulting Paul. He reports that they "sucker punched" him as well as punched him in the face. There was no theft involved.

Gold Beach, Oregon

Three teens accused of attacking homeless men as they sleep

April 29: A trial has been set for June 1st for two of the three youths who attacked a group of three homeless men as they slept. Ozzie Josephson, 18, Brian Joseph Gallardo, 17, and Curtis Matthews Bones, 18, allegedly fired roman candles at the men while they were in their sleeping bags, which then lit on fire. The men were sleeping in a group near a utility trailer.

Each attacker is charged with three counts of first-degree arson, punishable with up to a twenty-year sentence. Bones and Josephson, who are over 18, also face three felony charges of attempted assault, three counts of recklessly endangering another and one count of simple assault in addition to the arson charges.

MAY

Fairfield, California

Homeless woman beaten unconscious

May 12: A 25-year-old homeless woman was beaten and robbed Friday night and was not discovered until Saturday morning. She suffered serious head trauma and was airlifted to the hospital.

Police identified the perpetrators as five youths in their late teens to early twenties.

Manchester, New Hampshire

Group attacks homeless man

May 18: One man and four boys were arrested on charges that they had attacked a 60-year-old homeless man with a stick and rocks. The attack occurred near Interstate 293 in Manchester.

Bedford, New Hampshire

Homeless man assaulted by group of teenagers

May 21: A homeless man was attacked in a Wal-Mart parking lot by four teenagers. All four teens face assault charges for attacking the man, a Vietnam Veteran, while he was asleep in his car.

Deland, Florida.

Man ambushed by teens in third attack on homeless in three months.

May 31: At around noon, Bill Railsback, 51, was sitting in a wooded lot on East Howry Avenue when a group of four men between the ages of 16 to 21 beat him with no warning or words. "He did fight back", Deland Police Cmdr. Randel Henderson said of the military-trained man.

Cmdr. Henderson said Friday, "It could just be a stupid, juvenile prank. We're not downplaying this by any means. These things can tend to escalate."

Police continue to investigate the seemingly random and senseless beatings of homeless people by local teens.

JUNE

El Paso, TX

Homeless man beaten by teens

June 6: El Paso police are searching for a group of teens suspected of beating a homeless man in Central El Paso. Around 10:30 p.m. officers were called out to Rio Grande and El Paso for reports of an assault. Initial reports indicated that two men were found and taken to the hospital for treatment of unknown injuries. At least one of the individuals is homeless.

Police urge anyone with information on the incident to contact the local Crime Stoppers unit.

Portland, Maine

Homeless man beaten by youths near skate park

June 11: A man identified only as Jeff arrived at Oxford Street Shelter beaten and bloodied at 2:00 a.m. asking for a bed. He was sent to the hospital where his severe facial injuries required stitches. Hospital employees say his injuries are consistent with those of a violent beating. Jeff claims he remembers nothing, but does state that his necklace is missing, and must have been taken off of his neck during the attack. He told staff at Preble Street Resource Center that he'd been drinking heavily and was unconscious when he was attacked. He says it occurred near a skate park frequented by many youth.

Portland, Maine

Homeless woman pushed in street by youths

June 23: Two Preble Street Resource Center staff saw two utility repairmen and a female witness assisting a homeless woman named Lorraine who was barefoot and somewhat intoxicated. The utility repairman and the female witness had seen two young men pass Lorraine in the middle of the street and intentionally reached out to push her over. She fell and landed in the middle of the road, and the young men ran off. The witness pulled her car over and assisted Lorraine, as did the repairmen. The police were notified.

Kalamazoo, MI

Man attacked by youths hiding in woods

June 25: Ken Madison, 45, was attacked by a group of five teenagers at dusk in the woods.

The victim claims the attackers were waiting for a target from the crowd which had recently dispersed from a nearby baseball game. Madison was beat with a piece of wood, leaving injuries that required three staples to pull together his scalp, and four stitches in his chin.

Police are still searching for the attackers.

JULY

Charlotte County, Florida

Repeated attacks on the county's homeless

July 9: Martin Switzer, 62, and two other homeless men (one man, 57, would only offer his first name, Jerry) were shot at with paintball guns under the Peace River Bridge.

Switzer claimed two men approached them and asked what they were doing under the bridge. As they approached, one man was reported as saying, "Shoot that bum" before firing frozen pellets at the group.

July 21 and 22: Thomas Fendelander, 68, and Robert Beck, 54, were hurt when a group of rock wielding teens attacked them each near Edgewater Park. Fendelander was assaulted on the evening of the 21st and Beck early the next morning. Both incidents are under further investigations.

July 24: A 51 year-old man, Richard Landeen, was injured when a frozen paintball was fired from a passing gray compact car near the post office off Conway Street. Landeen claims the attacker shouted, "Yeah, you bum" before firing. "I was hit so hard," said Landeen, "it knocked me to my knees." The attack was not reported to police.

Suffolk, Virginia

Man arrested in beating of homeless man

July 10: A Crime Line tip helped police arrest 34-year old Christopher George Langston in the beating of a Virginia homeless man.

Police found Timothy Arnold, 48, severely beaten and lying face down in a parking lot. Officials took him to a local hospital where he was listed in critical condition. Last week, a 19-year-old Suffolk man was arrested in connection with the case. Langston was charged with aggravated malicious wounding, robbery, and two counts of conspiracy.

Akron, Ohio

Homeless man beaten by group of juveniles

July 13: A 45-year-old homeless man told police he was beaten by a group of juveniles. The man claims he was walking down the street when one of the boys said they “were going to have to beat him up”. The man says the boys then kicked and punched his face while others threw rocks at him.

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Homeless man shot with pellet gun

July 17: An unidentified homeless man was shot in the face with a pellet gun. The man was shot at as a car drove by.

The attack was not reported to the police and the victim refused medical attention. The police have no description of the shooter.

Providence, Rhode Island

Teen charged with involvement in series of attacks

July 22: A 15-year-old boy has been charged with using a brick to knock a homeless man, Joseph Amatel, 41, unconscious.

July 27: Patrick Cote, 47, was attacked by a group of youths. He was treated for facial lacerations at a local hospital.

July 27: John Ford, 39, told police that a man grabbed him and banged his head against the wall. He suffered a head cut and was treated at a local hospital.

July 29: Wayne Burdick, 55, was attacked by a group of teens. Burdick sustained injuries to his forehead and right eye in the attack while being punched and pushed to the ground.

The police are targeting the 15-year-old boy as well as five others in these series of attacks. Police say that all six suspects were not involved in each attack but that they were associated with each other.

AUGUST

Providence, Rhode Island

Man beaten in one of a series of attacks by youth

August 1: Timothy Campbell, 48, was attacked as he walked down Pine Street with another man and was robbed of \$20. Campbell, whose face was bleeding when the police arrived, said one of his teeth was knocked out.

Phoenix, Arizona

Two men arrested for a series of crimes against the homeless

August 5: Police arrested Dale S. Hausner, 33, and Samuel J. Deiteman, 30, in suspicion of two counts of first-degree murder and 14 counts of attempted first degree murder. The two are suspected in shootings that killed six and wounded 18 homeless people, in addition to fires started at two Wal-Mart stores over the past year.

Huntsville, Alabama

Teens beat homeless man with golf clubs

August 7: Six teenagers beat a homeless man, Craig Steven Rupert, with golf clubs outside downtown Huntsville. The man sustained head wounds and broken ribs in the attack and was placed in critical care at a local hospital. The teens first threw rocks at the man's campsite and later returned with golf clubs, beating Rupert until he could not stand up.

Four of the attackers were between the ages of 13 and 15; a fifth assailant is expected to be arrested in connection with the case. The sixth attacker, James William Whited, 16, is being charged as an adult for second degree assault.

This is the fourth teens-on-homeless attack in the last few weeks, including a senior prank at a local high school where students urged a homeless man to disrobe in the school's hall. Police spokesman Wendell Johnson responded to the increase in teen involvement by saying "it is kids who think they're doing something funny, but there's nothing funny about it."

Merritt Island, Florida

Two teens held for brutal beatings of three homeless men

August 10: Nicholas Wolkenhauer and Robert Magnon, both 16, are being held by police for their involvement in the beating of three Florida homeless men.

Wolkenhauer and Magnon first attacked Patrick Collins and Clifford Lucas while they slept under the canopy of a local business, kicking the men and then leaving. The boys returned with a metal baton and savagely beat Collins and Lucas. Lucas suffered a lacerated arm and Collins sustained serious facial trauma, fracturing his nose and eye socket. Later the boys attacked a third man, John Silva, who also was beaten with a metal rod which fractured his skull. Collins and Silva were both airlifted to a nearby medial center for treatment.

Robert Mangon pled guilty to charges of attempted murder and aggravated battery. He will face six years in prison. Mangon's accomplice, Nicholas Wolkenhauer pleaded not guilty, and will be sentenced in early 2007.

Kissimmee, Florida

Four teens arrested in connection with beating a homeless man

August 18: According to police, Jesus Riascos was asleep in his car when four men suddenly pulled him out of the vehicle. Riascos, 50, told officials he was pulled out and badly beaten. At times, the attackers used a baseball bat in the beating.

Four teens were arrested in connection with the crime. Ryan Burnette and Curtis Wilson, both 19, are being held in the Osceola County jail. They are facing occupied burglary and aggravated assault charges. Derrick Thompson and Andrew Connors, both 17, were taken into the Osceola County Detention Center. All four were arrested on charges of occupied burglary and aggravated battery.

SEPTEMBER

Indio, California

Man beaten and robbed

September: Joe Padilla, 58, a Vietnam veteran who has been homeless for fourteen years, was robbed and assaulted by three teenagers. The attack left Padilla with a black eye, broken ribs and other injuries. Padilla reported that a code of silence on the streets prevented him from reporting his crime.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Four boys savagely attacked a homeless man at a city park

September 20: Four boys savagely attacked a 44-year-old homeless man at a city park. One of the boys told police he was just an observer. According to detectives, William Teeters was sitting on a bench at Esplanade Park along the New River at about 9:15 PM when four juveniles approached him. Police recently found evidence linking Bobby Callins, 17, to the crime, in addition to Michael Livingston, Patrick Keels and Romel Jean-Louis, all 15, who were already connected with the assault. Detectives said one of the boys made a statement to Teeters and then punched him. Another boy pulled a knife on Teeters and cut him in the head, detectives said. Detectives stated that Teeters ran away from the boys, but they chased him and stabbed him in the back. The four boys then rode away on bicycles. Teeters was taken to Broward General Medical Center, where he was listed in fair condition and was later released.

The four teens pleaded not guilty to the charges of aggravated battery. They are being tried as adults and upon conviction face 30 years in prison.

Bradenton, Florida

Man beaten by attackers on bikes

September 25: A 35-year-old homeless man told officials that three males robbed him. The man claims he was walking through a parking lot when a trio on bikes approached him, asking for a cigarette. When he refused, they grabbed him from behind and shoved him to the ground. They stole an unreported amount of money from his wallet after punching and kicking him. The assailants are yet to be found.

OCTOBER

Kalamazoo, Michigan

Youths attack three homeless individuals in ten days

Early October: Over a ten day period a group of bike-riding teenagers have attacked three homeless individuals in Kalamazoo's north side. The victims, one woman and two men, are the first known targets of homeless-directed crime since late June. The names of the victims are being withheld.

The female victim reported being struck in the face as the teens approached her from behind. Her lip was cut, requiring stitches. The two male victims were both beaten, however neither of them are believed to have sought medical attention.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Woman attacked while sitting on bench

October: A woman in her late forties was accosted by a man who punched her in the stomach and face. The incident occurred while the woman was sitting on a bench along the Ben Franklin Parkway. The victim's boyfriend intervened until police arrived. The couple was taken to the hospital with scratches and bruises. To the victim's outrage, the attacker was not arrested.

Modesto, California

Teens attack deaf homeless woman, one in a string of crimes

October 5: Witnesses report seeing two teens attack a deaf homeless woman with a baseball bat. Police arrested the attackers, Anthony Dart, 19, and Julio Vargas, 18, at gunpoint later that night. The same attackers were witnessed striking a man riding a bicycle with the same baseball bat. The man on the bicycle is thought to be homeless. Dart and Vargas were booked on suspicion of assault.

The two are suspected of being the pair of teens responsible for hunting down several homeless individuals and beating them for entertainment throughout the past month. Upon their arrest the teens laughed and called their victims "worthless," claiming that they would never show up to court.

Painesville, Ohio

Two men attack homeless

October 4: Two men were found throwing rocks and stones at homeless individuals outside of Cleveland in Painesville. Neil Daugherty, 19 and Justin White, 23, were found attacking three homeless men who lived under a nearby bridge. The men began taunting the victims and then started throwing objects at them. Two of the victims' required medical treatment; Justin O'Brien, 22, received nine stitches, and Darrell Jenkins, 54, suffered a broken nose. The third victim, 21-year-old Joseph Lorenczi, suffered no major injuries.

El Cerrito, California

Video on cell phone depicts boys beating homeless man

October 5: Two 14-year-old boys and one 16-year-old attacked a man who walked past them. While one boy recorded the incident on his cell phone's camera, the other two rushed up and punched the back of the victim's head. The victim, 60, was not seriously injured, but was treated for heart problems. Police confiscated the video which shows the boys involved in a previous attack where they beat a homeless man. All three youths were booked in Juvenile Hall.

Corvallis, Oregon

Homeless man shot by frat member

October 14: Dennis Sanderson was shot in his thigh in the alley behind Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity at Oregon State University. Sanderson was shot by Joshua Grimes, 19, as he emerged from behind a trash bin. Investigators say he was not the only member present at the time of the shooting or the only one to have shot at homeless people previously. Sanderson says he was climbing out of the bin when he “felt something hit his left thigh.” He then went to another fraternity house for help, where someone dialed 911.

Upon investigation of the house nearly two-dozen weapons, including the .22 caliber used in the attack, were found. Ryan McKee, a member of another nearby fraternity, said people go through trash bins frequently but they usually don’t leave a mess and are friendly. Grimes was charged with assault and unlawful use of a firearm.

NOVEMBER

Portland, Maine

Panhandler attacked by man

November 7: Jason, a homeless man in his early 30s, reported to Preble Street Resource Center staff that while panhandling he asked a 25-year-old man unknown to him for 50 cents for a bus ticket. The man responded in an aggressive way yelling, “Get a job.” Jason replied, “Make me.” The victim reported that the man then assaulted him, poking his eye with his fingers, pushing him, and hitting him over the head. Jason went to Maine Medical Center’s emergency room, where they treated his eye by giving him eye drops and pain killers. Jason refused offers to contact the police or make a report because he stated he had past criminal convictions and felt that the “police don’t like [him].”

Manatee County, Florida

Homeless man beaten and robbed

November 10: A 49-year-old homeless man was beaten after accepting a ride from two men and a woman. The foursome drove around then stopped, attacking and robbing the man. The victim was left at the scene of the crime. Police have made no arrests.

Tampa, Florida

Homeless man shot by teens

November 15: Two teenagers, James Jackson, 17, and Clayton White, 16, robbed and shot a homeless man at a local gas station. According to reports, the teens approached 41-year old Don VanHook. Police officials say Jackson placed the gun to VanHook’s head and pulled the trigger, but the gun jammed. A struggle ensued and VanHook was shot above the knee.

Jackson is also charged with a shooting attack in October; the victim of that attack is not believed to be homeless. The teens were found hiding in local apartments and both have been charged with felony armed robbery and felony aggravated assault.

Cortez, Colorado

Group of homeless Native Americans targeted in attacks

November 24 & 25: Three separate attacks on Thanksgiving weekend targeted five Native Americans in and around City Park. Each of the five victims were identified as homeless and intoxicated at the time of the attack. On November 24, two teenagers beat a Navajo homeless man. He was treated for several fractured ribs after being kicked by the teens. The next day, two males beat two men in the park. They suffered minimal injuries.

Later that same day, a man and a woman were walking when the woman was thrown to the ground and kicked in the side by two male attackers. No serious injuries resulted. Officials say no suspects have been apprehended in relation to the incidents.

DECEMBER

Little Rock, Arkansas

Homeless man beaten in downtown area

December 5: Elkton Henry, 39, was walking in the downtown area when a man attacked him with a tire iron. Henry was struck repeatedly with the tool on his head and torso. During the beating, Henry reported that his wallet, containing about \$500, was stolen as well. Henry was taken to the hospital, where officials stated that his injuries are not life threatening.

Lauderhill, Florida

Teens caught beating homeless man on tape

December 23: Police have arrested four teenaged members of the “21st Street Boys” gang of beating a homeless man. Police say the boys “beat, dragged, and robbed” the homeless man during the attack which was caught on tape.

Three of the teens, Christopher Jennings, 18, Patrick Wilson, 18, and Joseph Graham, 17, were arrested after confessing to the attack. A fourth teen, Markenson Valcin, 14, was arrested after confessing to videotaping the incident. The video camera was in his possession at the time of arrest. A fifth, unidentified teen, is believed to have also been involved in the attack.

Gibsonton, Florida

Two teens and male adult attack homeless man

December 29: Two teens, 17-year-old Richard Morse, Jr. and 16-year-old Gabriel Greer, along with 24-year-old Travis Riley, starting throwing rocks at two homeless men who were walking. When the men fell, the attackers began beating and kicking them. One of the victims, Jeffery Price, 31, pulled a knife and started swinging. Greer and Riley both received injuries from the knife before fleeing. Price and the other victim, Kenneth Wilson, 30, both escaped with minor injuries.

Greer, Riley, and Morse have all been charged with aggravated assault and battery. Richard Morse, 17, Ralph Woods, 25, and Raymond Sample, 27, have all been charged with felony murder in association with the crime.

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Teens Charged in Beating

December 31: 17-year-old Joshua McNair has been charged with two counts of aggravated assault in connection with a set of attacks. 52-year-old John Palmer was sleeping behind a dumpster when he was struck several times with metal shears. After the attacker fled, Palmer called paramedics. He was treated and then released.

While walking back to his neighborhood, Palmer spotted his alleged attacker. The attacker threw a brick at Palmer and then proceeded to beat him with a pipe. Witnesses called the Broward Sheriff's Office and supplied a description of the attacker, who was later picked up by police. Palmer told the Sheriff's Office that he had not seen his attacker prior to the beatings.

CASE DESCRIPTION OF POLICE BRUTALITY BY MONTH, DATE AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL ATTACKS: 2

JANUARY

Takoma Park, Maryland

Man assaulted by police officer

January 8: Around 2:00 a.m., John Courtney, a homeless man, was handcuffed for questioning by officers and then attacked by Cpl. Douglas P. Malarkey.

According to sources, Malarkey jumped on Courtney's back as another officer held him facedown on the ground. Courtney had been seen earlier by the officers and ran away, sparking the suspicions that led to his handcuffing. The witnessing officers reported Malarkey to their supervisors; he was indicted for assault charges.

JULY

Aspen, Colorado

Women tasered by police officer

July 29: A 63-year-old homeless woman was searching through donation boxes behind a thrift shop when a female police officer tasered her. The elderly woman posed no immediate threat to the officer. According to the city manager, the officer was dismissed from the force.

CASE DESCRIPTION OF THREATS/INTIMIDATION BY MONTH, DATE AND CITY IN 2006:

TOTAL THREATS: 3

FEBRUARY

Winston Salem, North Carolina

Advocate of the homeless kills one, served time

February 12: Bobby Ray Wilson served 11 years after being convicted of killing a homeless man in 1993. In 1972 he was convicted with involuntary manslaughter for the stabbing of 13-year-old Ray Douglas Bunton, but was acquitted after awarded a new trial. He has been charged at least three times in connection with assaults on other homeless people.

While in jail he formed a nonprofit organization, Human Inc., dedicated to human rights, resources and education. He has been accredited with several other good works.

Unfortunately, following his release from jail, he returned to his old ways and was convicted of several incidents involving homeless victims.

Earlier this month three homeless men have described being threatened by Wilson but no charges have been brought. The homeless of Winston Salem have been warned to be on the lookout for Wilson.

THE LINK BETWEEN VIOLENCE AGAINST HOMELESS PEOPLE AND THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HOMELESSNESS:

There is a documented relationship between increased police action and the increasing numbers of hate crimes/violent acts against homeless people. “It seems that disturbed violent people take a cue from their cities’ responses to homelessness and become emboldened with more violent attacks if the city has portrayed homeless people as the cause of unemployment, decreasing property values, or vacant storefronts,” said Michael Stoops, acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless.

For eight years (1999-2006), the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has tracked a frightening increase in crimes targeting homeless people perpetrated by young people and severely disturbed individuals. These are well-documented violent attacks on a vulnerable population that result in injury and in many cases death.

Advocates from around the country have cited the relationship between municipal actions to restrict visibility of homeless people and hate crimes/violence. This overly broad enforcement of the law or laws passed by city governments specifically targeting homeless people are documented in The National Coalition for the Homeless and The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty’s report entitled, *A Dream Denied: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (January 2006). The report also ranks the 20 “meanest” cities in the U.S. for violating the civil rights of homeless people.

VIDEO EXPLOITATION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE:

“Bum Videos”

The release of “Bum Fights: Cause for Concern #1” in 2001 has led to a proliferation of bum videos. To our knowledge, seven different videos have been produced in the past six years: “Bum Fights: Cause for Concern #1,” “Bum Fights 2: Bumlife,” “Bum Fights 3: The Felony Footage,” “Bumfights 4: Return of Ruckus,” “Bum Hunts,” “Bum Show.com,” and “Bag Lady Beatings.” In these videos, homeless people are coerced to perform degrading and dangerous stunts for minimal rewards while filmmakers turn large profits.

Dehumanizing videos such as these solely add to the trends of violence and mistreatment of people who suffer from homelessness. We are aware of at least four incidents (Calgary in Alberta (Canada), Holly Hill (FL), Los Angeles (CA), and Toms River (NJ)) in recent years in which a connection was made between watching “bum videos” and then going out and hurting or killing homeless people.

The first video released in 2001, “Bum Fights: Cause for Concern #1,” was banned in several other countries. It was condemned on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. The filmmakers of the video, Ty Beeson and Ray Laticia, initially faced seven felony and four misdemeanor charges for the production of the video. The final court verdict required them to serve sentences of 250 hours of community service and three years probation. A civil suit by some of the homeless participants in the films is active. Yet “Bum Fights 2: Bumlife” was still released in 2003, followed by “Bum Fights 3: The Felony Footage” in 2004, and “Bumfights 4: Return of Ruckus” in 2006. Check out their website at: www.bumfights.com.

“Bum Fights 4: Return of Ruckus” Review

In his October 1st CBS *60 Minutes* piece, the late Ed Bradley attacked the creator of the “Bumfights” film series. Yet, despite lawsuits and public outrage like that from *60 Minutes*, the film series continues to thrive. In the last six years, the National Coalition for the Homeless has witnessed a significant increase in violent attacks on homeless people, with 189 such attacks resulting in death. The age group primarily responsible for these crimes on America’s homeless population is teenagers. These teens cite no motive for executing these brutal offenses, other than doing it for “fun.” This purposeless violence is supported in the continuation of the video series titled “Bum Fights.” These videos feature homeless people who are bribed with alcohol or false promises of money if they participate in dangerous acts and are filmed while doing so. Although “Bum Fights” is not now sold in major retail stores (in large part thanks to NCH’s lobbying efforts), it is still promoted by individual mom and pop shops and websites. “Bum Fights” has now sold hundred of thousand copies in the last six years,

and these videos will continue to inspire teens to kill or harm homeless people until they are eliminated entirely.

Even after much criticism received on these films, the producers created a fourth “Bum Fights” video (“Bumfights 4: Return of Ruckus”) in 2006. Participants in an earlier “Bum Fights” video had already hit the filmmakers with a civil lawsuit in San Diego in 2003. Therefore, the fourth edition is not as concentrated on the homeless population, but continues to exploit individuals. Most scenes portrayed teenagers partaking in harmful acts to themselves, with the exception of intermittent glimpses of homeless people. Throughout the movie, teenage boys light themselves on fire or jump off highly elevated surfaces, usually under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These images of inane violence climax in a scene depicting a homeless man walking around the street exposing his self. While the film focuses less on homeless people, it fails to end its repeated glorification of heartbreaking images.

The video provides no rationale as to why these boys are attacking themselves or others. The film’s only attempts to discredit the images comes through the opening statement that the people in the video are stupid, and that the producers do not condone such behavior. Still, the most disheartening realization of it all is that the people involved in “Bum Fights” deem their actions as being entertaining. They are neither avid hate activists nor were they involved in past discriminatory violence. They are simply kids looking for the thrill, and their emphasis is on the most vulnerable of people. The question now is: why? After four films we are left to wonder when the public will cease to be entertained by the degradation of human beings.

Stop Selling Hate

Even more disconcerting are corporate retailers that deem it acceptable to sell such videos, depicting homeless people taking part in dehumanizing acts of self-mutilation and violence for small rewards of money, alcohol, or drugs. Please do research in your own community to see if any small bookstores or large retailers are selling any of these videos.

These small and large retailers depend on their public image, yet find it acceptable to traffic violent and dehumanizing films and videos. They are taking advantage of a vulnerable.

NCH considers the sale of these films as approval of illegal behavior, and possibly encouraging the further development of these exploitative films. It perpetuates the rise of hate speech and hate crimes/violence directed against homeless people in the United States. NCH will continue to monitor these videos.

If you discover the distribution of such items in your community, take personal action by contacting your local retailer. Demand the following:

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

- a. Immediately stop selling these videotapes or DVDs, and destroy the current inventory.
- b. Turn over the profits from the sale of these violent videotapes to an agency of their choosing that serves homeless people.

Please also send a copy of your letter, email or fax to:

Michael Stoops
Acting Executive Director
National Coalition for the Homeless
2201 P St., NW
Washington, DC 20037-1033
Phone: (202) 462-4822 x19
Fax: (202) 462-4823
Email: mstoops@nationalhomeless.org

OPIE AND ANTHONY: EXPLOITERS OF THE HOMELESS

Spare Change Homeless Newspaper Article

America's homeless were yet again the subject of ridicule and mockery. On Saturday, December 16th, the "Opie and Anthony Radio Show" aired their annual Homeless Shopping Spree. The show is based out of New York City and broadcast nationally via XM Satellite Radio, DirecTV and terrestrial radio stations through out the country. The show cruelly mocks its homeless participants as they partake in a "shopping spree".

Participants were brought in from New York City to Short Hills, New Jersey where the event was filmed and recorded. Then, as a crowd of about two-thousand people gathered, the "contestants" were inundated with alcohol and cash while being encouraged to shop at high end retail stores. The show's disc jockeys, Gregg Hughes and Anthony Cumia, provided a running commentary of the day's events, often referring to the participants with inhumane and degrading nicknames such as "Tippy Tom and "Buttered Roll".

"This so-called shopping spree is a sick and twisted exercise that degrades the most vulnerable members of our society," said Thomas Menino, the Mayor of Boston, where the show was previously based. "The fact that WBCN has chosen the homeless and the holidays to present this humiliating and shameful attempt at humor is inhumane and shameful."

In a country suffering from an epidemic of violence against our homeless population, the cruel practices in Opie and Anthony's show take advantage of vulnerable people in vulnerable situations. What kind of society do we live in that there's humor in feeding someone's alcoholism? Ridiculing homeless individuals has become an almost socially acceptable form of entertainment. There would be an outrage if any other minority group was singled out with such derision.

This casual acceptance of homeless-directed ridicule treads dangerous water. Words of hate against homeless persons can quickly escalate into actions of hate. Actions that have resulted in violence targeted 614 homeless men, women and children resulting in 189 deaths over the past 8 years. Shockingly, an overwhelming majority of these crimes have been committed by teenagers.

Even Boston, a city known for its innovative practices to end homelessness, has not evaded this perverse trend. In March 2006, Scott Capella was attacked as he slept in Langone Park. Capella awoke after being kicked in the back and was then lit on fire by two men calling him a "homeless bum". Capella luckily survived but sustained serious second degree burns from the attack.

Events like those seen on Opie and Anthony's show are becoming more common. The show closely follows the theme of the "Bumfights" film series and www.bumfights.com. The movies, created in 2001, similarly offer alcohol and cash incentives for homeless men and women to perform dangerous stunts. To date, the Bumfights series has sold hundreds of

thousands of copies and spawned “Bumfights” 1 through 4 as well as other “bum” inspired videos like “Bumhunting.”

The Opie and Anthony show will gain further recognition when Opie and Anthony appear as guests on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno Thursday, December 21st. Coincidentally, their appearance falls on the seventeenth annual National Homeless Person’s Memorial Day. This year to honor the day the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Health Care for the Homeless Council are planning a candlelight vigil in Washington, D.C. to commemorate those who have died as a result of homelessness. Similar services are being held in over a hundred cities throughout the country.

Opie and Anthony’s glorification of the degradation of homeless people contradicts the hard work done by those to memorialize those lost to homelessness. Shame on Opie and Anthony for their need to degrade the homeless for a laugh. Shame on the two thousand people who showed up to watch the event. Shame on those who do nothing to end America’s continuous attempts to deny homeless people the treatment they deserve.

NCH would never wish homelessness on any individual but if Opie and Anthony should have the misfortune of becoming homeless, we hope they will see homelessness in a different light and be less quick to continue their sadistic treatment of homeless persons.

NATIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE:

Summary of New York Times Magazine's *Degradation Inc.*, (8/06/06), by Aimee Molloy

Aimee Molloy's August 6th 2006 article "Degradation Inc.," discusses the impact of Ryan McPherson's "Bumfights" videos. The article draws a connection between the violent degradation of homeless people in these videos to the onslaught of similar acts being committed by teenagers nationwide. It is the first major media source to cover this issue. Molloy provides much needed insight into the growing epidemic of hate crimes against the homeless in our country and exposes the producers of the show.

The "Bumfights" series, stylistically similar to MTV's popular television show "Jackass," were shot in San Diego and Las Vegas. The videos show homeless people fighting each other, jumping into trash cans and lighting their hair on fire all for small sums of money. First released in 2001, the videos have become wildly popular, drawing in hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue. Molloy interviews Rufus Hannah, Jr. known to viewers of the videos as "Rufus the Stunt Bum." A veteran, Hannah regrets his participation in the videos and states that he was always drunk during shooting. He performed Ryan's stunts for money and was unaware of the intended usage of the footage. The National Coalition for the Homeless has asked retailers to stop selling the videos and promoting hate crimes against the homeless. The coalition worries that the videos are causing a spike in violent crimes against the homeless. Hannah is now no longer homeless and is working with the coalition to develop legislation that would cite violence against the homeless as a hate crime.

To read the article in its entirety please see pages 88 and 89.

Summary of Dr. Phil's show, *Convince Me!* (12/12/06)

In Dr. Phil's December 12, 2006 episode on hate crimes against the homeless, he brought Ty Beeson to the stage only to kick him off the show moments later after viewing footage from Beeson's infamous "Bumfights" videos. Later Dr. Phil invited Simone Gaynor to the stage. Simone, the sister of Norris Gaynor, the forty-five year-old homeless man beaten to death with baseball bats by three teenagers in 2006, described her brother as a compassionate and loving man who would want all to be treated with compassion. Gaynor implored audience members and viewers to treat homeless people with dignity and respect, not as subhuman second-class citizens. She encouraged them to remember that homeless people have names, faces and people who love them. During the conversation, Dr. Phil revealed that at one point, he and his father were homeless. He reminds audience members and viewers alike that many people are only one missed paycheck or one illness away from homelessness. Dr. Phil asked Simone what she thinks of the "Bumfights" videos. She responded, "This is not OK. It's not OK for society to condone that anyone would be subjugated, that anyone would be labeled, that anyone would profit from other peoples' misfortunes." Dr. Phil's next guest was Sean Cononie, the founder of 14 social services programs for the homeless nationwide. Cononie said that there is indeed a direct correlation between the "Bumfights" videos and the rise in

attacks against the homeless. At the end of the segment, Dr. Phil handed Sean a check for \$25,000 in memory of Norris Gaynor.

Summary CBS' 60 Minutes with Ed Bradley (10/1/06)

On October 1st, 2006, CBS' "60 Minutes" aired a story by the late Ed Bradley on a national rise in the numbers of violent crimes toward the homeless and popular series of videos, and possible cause of the increased violence, called "Bumfights." These videos depict gruesome, harrowing images of homeless people being both beaten and abused by others and doing dangerous things to themselves, clearly under the influence of alcohol provided as payment by the directors. The videos are an underground sensation, selling hundred of thousands, especially among teenage males.

Ed Bradley reported that for the last five years, at least one homeless person has been killed every month. The National Coalition for the Homeless reports 614 attacks have occurred since 1999, including 189 fatalities. In January of 2006, three teenagers aged 17 and 18 beat three homeless men with baseball bats and sticks in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Two of these men were listed in critical condition for several days, and one died of head trauma and internal bleeding within hours.

Further back in May 2005, in Holly Hill, Florida five teens from 14 to 18-years-old spent three hours beating a 53-year-old homeless man to death. Bradley interviewed the oldest member of this group, Jeffrey Spurgeon, at the Florida state prison where he is serving a 35-year sentence. The evening began with smoking marijuana in the woods, where they encountered Michael Roberts, who was sleeping. The attacks began with beatings with sticks, escalating to attacks at the head with a two by four with nails through it.

Judge Joseph Will sentenced the boys to spend most of their adult lives in prison with no chance of parole. "It's anyone's guess why they, as well as many other young people involved in similar attacks throughout the country, did it," said Judge Will. Judge Will speculates that it was because they found one group of people less powerful than they were to pick on. Brian Levin, criminologist at California State University said, "Most hate offenses are not committed by hard core hate-mongers. They're often associations of young males who, looking for some thrill or excitement, go out and attack a target that will help validate them. And a target that they think is vulnerable. One that they can get away with. And one that has some kind of negativity associated with it." But to kill? Spurgeon's response to why they did it: "I guess for fun."

Many people believe a direct link exists between the "Bumfights" videos, produced by a group of four young adults including Ryan McPherson, and the recent upswing in attacks. The first of the four videos (Bumfights: Cause for Concern 1) was released in 2001, followed by Bumfights 2 (2003), Bumfights 3: The Felony Footage (2004), and now Bumfights 4: Return of Ruckus (2006) and the series has sold hundred of thousands of copies. Two particular homeless men, Rufus Hannah, Jr. and Donnie Brennan, became "stars" as a result

of the video's success. Both men are suing "Bumfights" to receive some of the money made off of the videos. Both men insist everything on film was "down to earth real." Brennan says the only payment they ever received was "five bucks for beer every once in a while."

One needs to know what is on these videos. Clips shown on the "60 Minutes" segment and Dr. Phil's television talk show depict men riding down stairs in shopping carts, slamming their heads through glass, and an extraction of a tooth with a pair of pliers. One of the most chilling segments is called "The Bumhunter" in which an actor attacks unknowing homeless people who are sleeping, and ties them up and gags them with duct tape.

McPherson seems to see himself as a noble presenter of the cold hard truth. "We're merely exposing something that I don't think a lot of people know exists. I think it's interesting. I can't imagine what would make somebody do the things that Rufus was doing to himself," he said.

So this truth he's exposing is that there are people in the world, rejected and ignored by most of society, who are desperate enough to agree to be a part of a film project in exchange for a little bit of cash and booze. Then, when they're good and liquored up, they'll do anything the directors tell them to do. It sure doesn't sound like rocket science, and it certainly doesn't sound like a positive contribution to the world.

Later in the interview McPherson says, "Society has a fascination with homeless people, people living on the streets. Almost a perverse fascination. People don't get a chance to see much of that. We thought it would be exciting to get a glimpse of that kind of life. Fights are part of the homeless culture. It's a way for them to vent their anger. We're simply there to video it." If this was his goal, he certainly could have created a documentary to inform the public about the plight of homelessness, the violence he suggests is a major part of their lives. Instead, he intentionally creates violence in order to sell a film that creates more antipathy toward the homeless.

McPherson claims he isn't responsible, and no, he didn't flat out order any of these young people to abuse any homeless person. However, glorifying the action itself and desensitizing an audience by presenting this behavior as something positive to be emulated. Somehow, that doesn't seem very noble.

A VILE TEEN FAD: BEATING THE HOMELESS

By Michael Stoops and Brian Levin

Reprinted from the October 18, 2006 edition of the Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON; AND SAN BERNARDINO, CALIF. – Across the nation, America's homeless are under attack - literally. They are hunted down during youthful rites of passage by roving packs of males armed with prejudice and tools of torture.

The number of violent incidents against our country's most vulnerable members has risen dramatically this year, with 16 murders in the first nine months so far. One homeless man was set ablaze in his wheelchair in Spokane, Wash.; another man was beaten with baseball bats in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; a homeless woman was drowned by two young men who rolled her into Tennessee's Cumberland River while she slept.

The hate behind this brutality is not fostered in rural Klan rallies or overseas terrorist camps, but in high school locker rooms and suburban living rooms. While homeless people have often been stereotyped as worthless, depraved, and disposable, prejudice now has a potent new ally: “bum rushing” videos.

This twisted fad has inspired some youths to kill for the “fun” of emulating what they see on a video screen. One group of teens inspired by these videos murdered Michael Roberts, a frail homeless man who succumbed after being relentlessly pummeled by nail-studded two-by-fours and a log in Holly Hill, Fla. Teens buy and trade hundreds of thousands of these videos, making their producers rich. They also film their own assaults, broadcasting them online.

In the first nine months of 2006, 36 of 58 known homeless attackers were teens ages 14 to 19. Such violence seems to be correlated with the rise of bum videos. The number of reported incidents in 2003 nearly doubled, jumping from 36 reported attacks in 2002 to 70 in 2003. The number of non-lethal attacks reached 77 through the end of this September.

In Calgary, Alberta, youths filmed themselves beating and urinating on a homeless man, and screaming out “bum fights!” In Los Angeles, a youth admitted that he, too, was inspired to kill a homeless man with an aluminum baseball bat after viewing a video.

Perhaps most disturbing is not the media's influence on violence and prejudice, but the nation's almost casual acceptance of this violence and the images that derive from it.

If any other minority group reported hate crime homicide numbers this high there would be a national outcry for justice. A comparison by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, and the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), found that from 1999 to 2005 there were 167 homeless homicides by domiciled

attackers. The number of these killings is more than double the number of all other officially tabulated hate crime homicides combined. The glaring disparity underscores the case for action. But how do we act?

We need to enhance data collection by law enforcement and improve outreach to the homeless community. Homelessness must be added to vulnerable-victim laws and hate-crime legislation.

Officials should work to raise community awareness so neighbors can help eradicate homelessness altogether, not just remove it from their own line of vision. Community education efforts should model the NCH's Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau. The Bureau is made up of current and former homeless people who give talks to break stereotypes. This year, this panel has made more than 300 appearances, speaking to more than 17,000 people, mostly youths.

Their work is leading the way to stop the dehumanization of those without homes. Without further effort, violence against the homeless will continue. The burden falls on all our shoulders to end homelessness. Until the day when all Americans are housed, the least we can do is ensure their safety.

Michael Stoops is acting executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington. Brian Levin is director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

DEGRADATION INC. BY AIMEE MOLLOY

Reprinted from the August 6, 2006 edition of the New York Times Magazine

Of all the things Rufus Hannah regrets — discovering alcohol at age 14, living homeless for 12 years — it is his notoriety that haunts him. Every time someone recognizes him, he told me recently, he feels “so ashamed.” Hannah, known to his fans as Rufus the Stunt Bum, is one of the inadvertent stars of a DVD series called “Bumfights.” Filmed on the streets of suburban San Diego and Las Vegas, the videos portray homeless people fighting one another, being pushed down hills in shopping carts and jumping off buildings into Dumpsters. What unfolds looks like a cross between “Jackass,” MTV’s stunt-based show, and a cinéma vérité portrait of the homeless as addicted, crazy and desperate enough to, for a little cash, light their hair on fire, pull out a tooth with pliers and have “Bumfights” tattooed on their bodies.

Hannah, who is 51 and an Army veteran, became involved with Bumfights more than five years ago, when Ryan McPherson, a high-school student and aspiring filmmaker, offered him \$5 to run headfirst into milk crates stacked in the parking lot of a grocery store in El Cajon, Calif. “He told me he was doing a video for his economics class on what it was like when you don’t have a job,” Hannah said. “I just wanted some money to get drunk, so I did what he told me to. I never had any idea the stuff he was filming would become what it did.”

What it became, according to the film’s producers, was the “fastest-selling independent video series.” Released in 2002, the first “Bumfights” sold for \$19.95, mainly through the Bumfights Web site. Soon after, McPherson and his fellow filmmakers sold the rights for \$1.5 million to two Las Vegas producers, who have since churned out sequels. Sales, initially modest but steady, exploded after Howard Stern featured the video on air. Within six months, revenues neared \$600,000.

After the media attention, McPherson and the original filmmakers were charged with conspiracy to stage an illegal fight, a misdemeanor. They pleaded guilty and were ordered to do community service. (McPherson was recently sent to jail for failing to complete his community service.)

Many homeless people in the video seem drunk, stoned or mentally ill. Hannah said he was never sober during filming and participated for the money (at most \$10 per stunt). In one recurring segment called “Bum Hunter,” a young man in safari clothes sneaks up on sleeping homeless people. He binds and gags them, then “marks” them by writing a number on their foreheads.

The National Coalition for the Homeless, calling the films “degrading” and “sickening,” began a campaign against “Bumfights” soon after its debut. The coalition approached retailers and asked them to “stop selling hate.”

Myra Mendible, a professor of cultural studies at Florida Gulf Coast University, says the films reflect a trend. "Reality television has created an audience that is not only desensitized to images of human suffering but also has acquired an appetite for them." McPherson, who is unapologetic, says "Bumfights" was "fresh and new" and simply filled the demand for more shocking material.

The homeless coalition says it fears that the films have contributed to teenage violence against the homeless, especially because viewers are encouraged to submit "ruckus" footage of their own. According to law-enforcement officials, a number of young people have videotaped themselves attacking homeless people, including four teenagers in Melbourne, Australia, who killed a man by setting fire to his tent; five in Alberta, Canada, who assaulted a homeless man with bottles and a club, then urinated on his face; and four young men near Cleveland, who crept up on homeless people and shocked them with a stun gun.

Hannah, who says he has been sober for three years and is employed and no longer homeless, recently settled a lawsuit with the filmmakers. They agreed to an undisclosed amount in damages and to not use his image in future videos. He is also working with the homeless coalition toward legislation that would make violence against the homeless a hate crime. Meanwhile, the current "Bumfights" producers have just released "Bumfights 4."

Aimee Molloy is the author, with James Yee, of "For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire."

APPENDIX A: SOURCES

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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February 2007

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February 2007

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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February 2007

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

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APPENDIX B:

The following story was sent to NCH by Ms. Lisa Suhay. It was written to help explain to children the terrible crimes we see throughout the country against homeless individuals.

“Mr. Gast Lives Everywhere: A Homeless Folk Tale”

By Ms. Lisa Suhay

My grandpa loves to sit on the park bench by the waterfront and watch the big container ships as they pass.

“All those big colorful containers,” Grandpa says, “They're like people on the street. Old or new, fancy or plain, each one is chock full of travels, tales and fortunes both good and bad.”

Mr. Gast sits on a bench nearby. He's younger than Grandpa, about as old as my dad. When Grandpa said that about the containers, Mr. Gast let out a sigh that sounded like the wind when it whistles down our drainpipe, all tinny and old.

Grandpa told me Mr. Gast is homeless. He doesn't live in a house or apartment, just around the city.

He had a home once, but said he could never get a job that paid him very much and was so poor for so long he finally had to choose between food and shelter.

“I'm just sick with a case of the nothings.” Mr. Gast says, “When you got nothing for as long as I've had it, it makes you forget how to want the somethings, like a house and a regular bed.”

I see Mr. Gast in the park almost every day with bags of stuff all held together with a bungee cord and tied down to an old stroller. He wears layers and layers of clothes, even in the hottest part of summer. In the winter his shoes are covered in plastic bags from our supermarket where he bags the groceries.

One day some teenagers came by and shouted at Mr. Gast, “Check out Baggy Man! Nice shoes!”

Mr. Gast hung his head and his eyes looked like the windows of a house where someone had just shut off the lights.

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

Grandpa looked very angry, but he didn't say anything. The next time he went to the park I noticed he put bags on his shoes too. Mr. Gast smiled and his lights came back on in his eyes.

Since then Grandpa and Mr. Gast are what they call "The Baggy Bench Club." Grandpa brings coffee and pastries and Mr. Gast brings his stories to tell.

He's been so many places and done so many different things. He sailed boats and drove a chicken truck in Maryland. He's been a berry picker and a trash hauler. The best story is about how he lived in Florida down on Pine Island and helped run an emu ranch!

"Yup, I can ride an emu better than most," Mr. Gast said once.

Grandpa tells of how he worked at the car factory and how he stopped working when they closed it down. Mr. Gast had worked there too. That was what he called, "The last good job."

Then one day I came home from school and Mom was crying and everybody in the whole neighborhood was at our house. Mom explained that Grandpa and Mr. Gast had been at their Baggy Bench Club that morning and the teenagers came back.

When they saw Grandpa walking with bags on his shoes they thought he was a homeless man and hit him. Grandpa was in the hospital.

Mom let me visit Grandpa and I asked him why this happened. "Remember those ship containers? Some had ugly things spray painted on them by people who are angry at the world and just want to take it out on something that didn't matter. Well, some people look at homeless people like they're just containers that don't matter."

"But you're not homeless! You matter!" I said.

Grandpa sighed, a long tinny sigh just like Mr. Gast. "Child, everybody matters."

After that Mr. Gast disappeared and we all worried that something bad had happened to him. A whole year went by with no word.

Grandpa and I still go to the park together, but Grandma said no more bags for Grandpa's shoes. She makes him dress up like we're going to church on Sunday.

Its foggy today and the ships are all letting their deep rumbly horns blow. You can't see the ships, just the colorful containers drifting along in the cottony white.

I rub my eyes because it's like seeing a ghost. "Grandpa look! Look! A Message!"

HATE, VIOLENCE, AND DEATH ON MAIN STREET USA

February 2007

There, drifting through the fog is a bunch of containers, each with one giant word sprayed on the side. They read: "GREETINGS BAGGY BENCH! --THE EMU RIDER"

Grandpa sipped his coffee and looked out into the fog. "Yessir, those old containers matter. You never know when they have something to say, or give, that you didn't expect."

Author's Note:

This tale is dedicated to the five homeless men of Virginia Beach, VA who were murdered in that city since May 2005: Mr. Blease "Butch" Pruitt, Mr. Ronald Wood, Mr. Joseph Moore Jr., Mr. Shawn John and Mr. Paul Mountford - the real life Mr. Gasts - ghosts haunting our American dreams.

** How Mr. Gast got his name. The word *gast* means "soul, spirit, life, breath," from the German word **gest* or "ghost." I chose it because the homeless in our community are often treated like ghosts. We look right through them and treat them as if what we say and do to them will just pass through them. It doesn't. ~ **Lisa Suhay** www.lisasuhay.com

APPENDIX C:

OVER THE LAST 8 YEARS, 614 HOMELESS MEN, WOMEN
AND CHILDREN HAVE BEEN ATTACKED. 189 HAVE DIED.



Ricky White, 45, Galveston, TX

Photo courtesy of The Galveston County Daily News.

- Victims range from 4 months to 74 years old.
- 68% of the perpetrators were ages 13–19.

WHAT CAN WE DO? We need to educate lawmakers, advocates, and the general public on the problem of violence against homeless persons. Your support will help the National Coalition for the Homeless take a stand against violence!

Please become a member of NCH by sending in your tax-deductible contribution today!



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