



March 18, 2022

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Katko  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Katko:

We write to thank you for holding the March 17, 2022, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security hearing titled, “The Targeting of Black Institutions: From Church Violent to University Bomb Threats.” This hearing gave much needed attention to the hate and discrimination that continues to endanger our communities on a daily basis, and we ask that the Committee consider reforms to address this concerning rise in hate crimes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the past 100 years, the Black and Jewish communities in America have overcome considerable odds to fight discrimination and gain a stronger and more secure place in society. Black and Jewish people, including Jews of color, have often worked hand-in-hand in the face of widespread hatred to achieve these outcomes, marching together during the civil rights movement, jointly petitioning the Supreme Court and Congress, and helping one another on the ground in neighborhoods across the country.

The Black and Jewish communities also have shared histories of suffering threats, intimidation and violence. Threatened and actual violence have often targeted our most sacred spaces – our houses of worship, our communal spaces and our centers of learning. Unfortunately, that history is not simply a relic of the past.

## **CURRENT TRENDS**

### **Rise in anti-Black Hate Crimes**

The FBI’s annual hate crimes report revealed that 2020 saw a 13 percent increase in reported hate crimes from the previous year and represented the highest total in almost two decades. A total of 8,263 hate crime incidents were reported, an increase from 7,314 in 2019. As has been the case consistently since hate crimes reporting began, race-based, and specifically anti-Black hate crimes represented the largest portion of reported hate crimes. In 2020, there was a sharp increase in reported hate crimes targeting Black people; that number rose approximately 49 percent, from 1,930 in 2019 to 2,871. The 2,871 anti-Black hate crimes reported to the FBI accounted for 35% of all reported hate crimes that year.

Unfortunately, the Black and African American community was not alone; there was also a rise in hate crimes against members of the Jewish community, Asian Americans, and the LGBTQ community. Asian Americans experienced a 73% increase in hate crimes, 20.5% of hate crimes victims were targeted because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, and 54.9% of victims who were attacked due to religious bias were attacked for anti-Jewish bias.

## **Hate Online**

One urgent aspect of hate crimes is the proliferation of hate and harassment online. The ADL Center for Technology and Society conducts an annual survey to assess bias-motivated online harassment and, in 2021, found disturbing results. Overall, 41 percent of Americans reported having experienced some form of online hate and harassment, with 33 percent of respondents attributing their harassment to an identity characteristic, defined as their sexual orientation, religion, race or ethnicity, gender identity, or disability. Twenty-eight percent of respondents who were harassed reported being targeted because of their race or ethnicity. The nationally representative survey found a sharp and deeply concerning rise in online harassment of African Americans based on their race, from 42 percent attributing their harassment to their race last year to 59 percent in the most recent survey.

## **Targeting of Black Institutions**

Since the beginning of the year, more than a third of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country have been targeted with bomb threats.<sup>1</sup> Many campuses received several waves of threats, necessitating cancellation of classes, shelter in place orders, and disruption of activities, including during Black History Month. While no bombs were ultimately discovered, the impact is still very real—on students, faculty, their families, law enforcement and the broader community. These threats were hate crimes that sparked widespread fear and terror in these intentionally-targeted Black communities.

While the cases are still under investigation, law enforcement authorities reportedly believe the threats are racially motivated. It is no coincidence that HBCUs, a longstanding symbol of Black

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<sup>1</sup> Albany State University (Albany, GA); Alcorn State University (Lorman, MS); Arkansas Baptist College (Little Rock, AR); Bethune-Cookman University (Daytona Beach, FL); Bowie State University (Bowie, MD); Charles R. Drew University (Willowbrook, CA); Claflin University (Orangeburg, SC); Coppin State University (Baltimore, MD); State University (Dover, DE); Dillard University (New Orleans, LA); Edward Waters University (Jacksonville, FL); City State University (Elizabeth City, NC); Fayetteville State University (Fayetteville, NC); Florida Memorial University (Miami Gardens, FL); Fort Valley State University (Fort Valley, GA); Hampton University (Hampton, VA); Harris-Stowe State University (St. Louis, MO); Howard University (Washington, DC); Jackson State University (Jackson, MS); Kentucky State University (Frankfort, KY); Lincoln University (Chester County, PA); Mississippi Valley State University (Itta Bena, MS); Morehouse College (Atlanta, GA); Morgan State University (Baltimore, MD); Norfolk State University (Norfolk, VA); North Carolina Central University (Durham, NC); Philander Smith College (Little Rock, AR); Prairie View A&M University (Prairie View, TX); Rust College (Holly Springs, MS); Shorter College (Little Rock, AR); Southern University and A&M (Baton Rouge, LA); Spelman College (Atlanta, GA); Tougaloo College (Tougaloo, MS); University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (Pine Bluff, AR); University of the District of Columbia (Washington, DC); Winston-Salem State University (Winston-Salem, NC); Xavier University of Louisiana (New Orleans, LA).

resilience and excellence, were targeted at the start of Black History Month and during a time of widespread “equal opportunity” hate, which has affected marginalized communities nationwide.

These are just the latest threats faced by the Black community. From the September 15, 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Church in Birmingham, Alabama, to the wave of fire-bombing of black churches in the 1990s, to the shooting at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, Black churches have long been targets by white supremacists seeking to terrorize the Black community. Moreover, an [ADL report](#) underscores how white supremacists continue to use centuries-old racist stereotypes to attack the Black community. Even during the coronavirus pandemic, white supremacists turned a “[population control](#)” [conspiracy](#) into a racist advocacy mission. Year after year, [ADL data](#) continue to underscore the threat posed by white supremacist actors and in turn, the threat they pose to Black communities and institutions.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Earlier this month, Congress finally passed the Emmett Till Antilynching Act. It is unconscionable that it took until 2022, more than a century after initial efforts started, to recognize one of the most terrorizing, hate-fueled acts as a federal hate crime. It is a stark reminder that so much more must be done to protect the Black community, and all communities targeted by acts of hate and terror.

### **Implementing a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes**

Congress took a significant step forward in improving our nation’s response to hate crimes by passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act in 2021, which included the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act. The bill included crucial measures to expedite an Attorney General review of hate crimes nationwide, requires the promulgation of guidance to law enforcement agencies regarding best practices for establishing hate crime reporting tools and collecting data on these crimes, and created new grant programs to provide much-needed resources to establish state-run hate crime hotlines and improve hate crime reporting to the FBI. The Department of Justice has already made strong progress in implementing provisions of this law; however, full implementation of all of the important new grant programs requires that Congress appropriate funds for them. ADL and the National Urban League urge Congress to appropriate \$15 million for grant programs to implement the National Incident-Based Reporting System, to create State-run hate crime reporting hotlines, and to conduct training and develop protocols for identifying, analyzing, investigating, and reporting hate crimes.

However, passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act should not represent the end of congressional efforts to address hate crimes; there remains significant work to do to implement a comprehensive and data-informed approach to this devastating problem. A necessary prerequisite to developing such an approach is having complete and reliable data about hate crimes – data that does not currently exist. Multiple factors contribute to deficits in our knowledge about the full scope and nature of hate crimes, including victimized communities’ distrust and avoidance of law enforcement agencies; lack of training for officers in recognizing and investigating bias motivations; and frontline agencies’ limited capacity to maintain and share records with the FBI. Some of these challenges can begin to be addressed through full implementation of the NO HATE Act; however, there remains one key weakness in the current hate crime data collection program

– it relies on voluntary participation by state and local law enforcement. Congress must evaluate options for making hate crime reporting mandatory by all law enforcement agencies.

In addition to ensuring a robust system of hate crime reporting, we must also invest in community-centered approaches to preventing hate crimes from occurring in the first place. The communities that are most impacted by hate crimes must be positioned to lead efforts to develop policies and programmatic approaches to address this problem. One way that the Administration can immediately support this community-focused preventative work is through a revitalized Community Relations Service (CRS) at the Department of Justice. CRS is the only federal agency dedicated to working on the ground with community groups to resolve local conflicts and prevent and respond to hate crimes and incidents. CRS works to build relationships with community stakeholders before tragedy occurs, helping ensure that crisis response can be both timely and meaningful. CRS's focus on prevention provides a unique value-add to communities, bringing experts to help problem-solve and build local capacity to prevent and respond to conflict, tension, and bias-motivated incidents. CRS also provides crucial relationship-building programs designed to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community – work that is vital to effectively preventing and responding to hate crimes as many of the communities targeted by such violence often have mistrust of law enforcement rooted in historical and ongoing police violence against marginalized communities. We applaud the Administration's early efforts to revitalize this crucial agency and urge Congress to increase the annual funding for this agency to \$40 million. In addition, DOJ can help support community-led efforts to prevent hate crimes and address their root causes by giving priority for federal grant funding to those qualified institutions of higher education and nongovernmental organizations that propose to use funding to provide services that reduce the risk of hate crimes or to provide legal, material, social, and other support to people and institutions affected by hate crimes.

### **Nonprofit Security Grant Program**

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is an essential tool in protecting nonprofits, including houses of worship and other faith-based organizations. The program can be used for training and equipment to secure facilities. However, those that apply have a frustratingly low likelihood of receiving financial relief for securing themselves from the program. For houses of worship, community needs should be more front of mind than providing for their own security or raising funds for security precautions.

In the last grant cycle, 3,361 applicants requested \$399,763,916 in NSGP grants, according to FEMA. Congress had only funded the program at \$180 million, providing for a maximum of only 45 percent of security costs that nonprofits had assessed were necessary for their community's security. That funding gap represents almost \$220 million in unfunded liabilities for nonprofit organizations in an era of high and rising threats from domestic violent extremists.

Congress took a significant step forward in increasing the appropriation for this program for FY 2022 to \$250 million. However, this still falls far short of the demonstrated need. NSGP poses a significant opportunity to help secure our communities and even modest reforms can provide significant support. ADL and the National Urban League recommend that Congress enact the following reforms:

- Significantly increase the pool of available funding for NSGP;
- Scale outreach and engagement to increase the applicant pool;
- Scale outreach and engagement to guide applicants;
- Broaden the spectrum of eligible grantee expenses;
- Provide full support to DHS to faithfully execute a scaled program; and
- Ensure transparency and oversight in the administration of the program.

In February 2022, you announced the introduction of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act of 2022 (H.R. 6825), which would address many of these concerns and strengthen the program. Not only would this legislation increase funding for this crucial program to \$500 million annually, but it would create further resources for administering the program, including a dedicated office within FEMA to administer the program and provide greater outreach, engagement, education, technical assistance, and support to eligible nonprofits. ADL and the National Urban League urge Congress to pass your legislation without delay.

## CONCLUSION

Our communities come together today to speak out against these tactics of intimidation and violence. We know what motivates the perpetrators of such incidents – the desire to isolate and other whole communities. The fear and trauma inflicted is the point. Vandalism, arson, and threats are the precursors to actual violence, and we must interrupt the cycle at the start.

We refuse to allow those perpetrators to succeed. In times of crisis, our communities have depended on one another, have found comfort and safety in the arms of friends and colleagues who have shown up for us. We are submitting this joint statement to demonstrate that solidarity and to signal not only to each other, but also to those who would isolate and divide us, that their hateful actions cannot tear us apart.

We hope that the Committee will advance the policy solutions advocated for above and that Congress will demonstrate continued vigilance in protecting our communities and combatting hate-fueled violence.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Greenblatt  
CEO and National Director  
Anti-Defamation League



Marc Morial  
President and CEO  
National Urban League

## ABOUT THE SIGNATORIES

*ADL is the world's leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry, its timeless mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and fighting hate online, ADL is the first call when acts of anti-Semitism occur. ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.*

*The National Urban League is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment in order to elevate the standard of living in historically underserved urban communities. The National Urban League spearheads the efforts of its 92 local affiliates through the development of programs, public policy research and advocacy, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than 2 million people annually nationwide.*