

## SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

### Hate Crimes Task Force

#### Verbatim Transcript

The Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force Meeting was held at the William H. Rogers Legislative Building in Smithtown, New York, on Wednesday, September 30, 2009 at 3:00 P.M.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. DuWayne Gregory  
Laura A. Ahearn  
Reynolds E. Hawkins  
Dr. David Scott Kilmnick  
Chief Inspector Ty Mojica  
Reverend JoAnn Barrett  
Renee Ortiz  
Reverend Roderick Pearson  
Det. Janet Cassidy (representing Det. Sergeant Reecks)  
Rabbi Steven Moss

#### MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Det. Sergeant Robert Reecks  
Alexander Gutierrez  
Mohsen Elsayed

#### ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Maxvel Rose, Aide to Legislator Gregory  
Charlotte Koons, Board member, NYCLU  
Andrea Callan, NYCLU  
Luis Valenzuela, LI Immigrant Alliance  
Michael O'Neill, East Hampton Anti-Bias Task Force  
All other interested parties

#### VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT TAKEN BY:

Gabrielle Skolom, Court Stenographer

*[The meeting was called to order at 3:13 P.M.]*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Let's get started. Thank you, everyone, for coming.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

As we -- I think it's important that after every meeting we get together and kind of have a recap of the previous meeting. Does anyone have any thoughts about the last meeting, any concerns as we go into the last scheduled meeting? Do you have a comment, Rabbi Moss?

**RABBI MOSS:**

Am I only one that has a comment? I don't want to be the only one. A couple thoughts from me: I was not happy with, to be honest, with the meeting as it evolved only because -- well, for two reasons, but certainly one of them being that I believe we all still want to hear more voices from the community itself and from those who are suffering, and it seems to me this venue, as much as I'm glad we're doing this, really has not succeeded in that way. And I heard at the last evaluation meeting like this one it was suggested -- and I want to make this suggestion now -- is I think we need to go into the community in small groups, maybe two or three of us and choose all -- you know, across the board, not just the Latino community from which we're hearing most of the presentations, but all the segments of the community spend some footwork time because, to me, if the Southern Poverty Law Center was able to be successful in reaching out to people, then we should be able to do the same thing because obviously people, for whatever reason, are not coming to us, but I believe we can go to them and hopefully receive firsthand reports.

I know, for instance, a number of years -- well, actually, recently in Brentwood, when we formed, through the Suffolk Community Council, the Unity Project, and we began to have meetings in a church with the day laborers, and we even brought in and became a liaison with Third Precinct and Inspector Cuff who speaks Spanish. It was wonderful because the stories and the things we heard, and we were able to act on them, and those gentleman would not have come to us, so we went to them. And then, God, maybe 15 years ago, is is that a number of members of the Human Rights Commission, myself, met in the subbasement of a church up in Port Jefferson because members of that community wanted to meet with us, the Hispanic community up there. So that's one suggestion.

The other thing is is that I am concerned about our credibility, and not to go into the specifics of what was said and whatever, and some of the intimations that were voiced at a meeting by some of the speakers is is that I hope it's very clear to all of us that if we can speak at the task -- at the hearings, we're here to listen, then it must remain that way throughout the life of this Task Force. And it's very -- if you want to call it a gag order, but it is very important that we remain on credible positions and that is not to take advantage of the positions that we might have in the community to be able to speak back because -- simply because we're -- we can't speak at the meeting -- at the hearing doesn't mean that we, therefore, can speak -- go about and speak anywhere we want to afterward because, otherwise, then we have no credibility at all. And that's what we have to stand for. That's what we stand for because otherwise people will say, "What is going on here?" as some people did begin saying at the last meeting. So those are two things that I did want to share. Again, I am very proud to be a part of this, and I think we always have to stay at that higher level, and that's our responsibility, which is not, not easy at all.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Anybody else? No?

**RABBI MOSS:**

By the way, I'm willing to do the footwork. I'm not saying my co-chair here, she should do it, okay? I'm willing to volunteer along with everyone.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I think that -- this addresses your first comment. I think that's something that Dr. Kilmnick had mentioned and others in our last meeting. Beyond the scheduled meeting, as the resolution calls for, we have at a minimum four meetings, and we scheduled four meetings, but we can certainly have more, and we certainly should look at changing the strategy, if you will, so that we could reach the people we need to reach and, I think, possibly going into small groups will do that. I think we probably need to put our heads together and figure out what venues would be appropriate that we can reach those people, but I think that's certainly something we should consider.

Secondly, I agree with you also on your second comment. You know, as a -- you know, there's always a concern when you have a task force, a commission or a group or entity of this size where, you know, the media or general public try to get you to comment on certain things, get feedback and if, you know -- and sometimes it's difficult to consider or perceive the impact that one person's comments may have on the task force or whatever, and I think we're struggling with that right now. As you can see, our past, at the meeting, there was some comments made about some statements with members on the Task Force, and I have met with people outside the Task Force to -- you know, voicing their concerns about it as well, and I think that, for one, to just to address part of the comments, I think on one speaker's behalf, I think there was a misunderstanding as to the makeup or the genesis of the Task Force and the County Executive's influence. And I say that by the person's comments that we are kind of in our own gag order or if we say something out of line quote unquote -- I think is what he said -- that we will be removed from the Task Force, which is not true.

So I think there's a misunderstanding of how the Task Force came about, who has influenced or someone's ability to have control over the Task Force, but beyond that, there is the, as you alluded to, there's the perception, and that directly affects our credibility, and I would just ask, and we had spoken about this probably, if not our first, our second meeting, that, you know, that, as you correctly stated, we should be here to listen. We shouldn't be making comments, and if there are any comments, it would be from me, so that we speak with one voice and not 13 separate voices.

But we do have a perception issue, and I don't know really know how we get past that. I don't have the ability to remove someone from the Task Force. Understanding that, you know, that there, you know, could possibly be inherent conflicts of interest, you know, given someone's -- what they decide to do, their personal actions. I understand that some people have professional responsibilities and responsibilities to the Task Force, and sometimes they're clash, but what I have been telling people is that, you know, don't judge us as we go through the process. We understand you have concerns. Wait till the end product, you know, and then, you know, reserve your judgment for later because we're going to -- we're trying to do the right thing, as you can see. You should have gotten a notice already, on October 21st, we're going to have the Southern Poverty Law Center come and present to us. We're trying to get the Anti-Defamation League and one other group, the Hagedorn Foundation, and that's just the first meeting, then we're going to have other groups. You know, we're looking to the Long Island Immigration Alliance, some of their organizations to come present, the NAACP and other organizations just to give their ideas or concerns about hate crimes. And then we're looking at the -- the Attorney General's Office wants to make a presentation; the Nassau County Police Department, their hate crimes section; and that's it.

So we're going through the process -- I think we're going to the appropriate agencies and organizations so that in the end, people say, "Well, you know, they really tried their best, and we'll see what we get from it." So I think we're looking in the right directions, and I think in the end, I'm hopeful people will be proud of the work that we've done and find it credible and useful. But you're right; there is a concern out there.

**RABBI MOSS:**

First of all, I do want to make sure it's on record that I want to compliment you on not only the inspiration for the creation but also the way you've conducted the meetings. Very good job.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**RABBI MOSS:**

But let me say that perception is a very good thing to deal with simply because we are in quotes meeting in this building. It seemed to be -- it taints us, and that's unfair. And certainly I -- my work at the Human Rights Commission -- have to deal with that all time, and that's not right. It's very unfair, and so we just have to keep on, as you say, with our efforts, and as long as we're doing the right thing -- we know we are -- that's all you can do. But I do want to make sure that it's very clear to all the members of this Task Force that -- and I hate to use this word, but this gag order in that sense, and that's the only term I can think of, is going to be in place until the Task Force is disbanded, whenever that occurs, although from your description right now, I think we're in that for the long haul. I didn't know that when we began.

[Laughter]

Gosh. But anyway, I think it should be very clear that we cannot speak about issues that are raised in public hearing or issues -- that we deal with this publicly in other venues or forums as long the Task Force is in existence because then we are taking advantage of our particular positions. Is that in agreement with you and everybody?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I certainly agree with that. The Task Force is effective till February of next year when I anticipate that we'll do the report. So I think that's reasonable, and that's one of the reasons I felt that it's important that we get together after the hearings so that we can keep moving on and look beyond that, because before you know it, it's going to be November, and then, you know, the holidays are going to come, and then before you know it, February is going to be here, so we need to kind of keep the ball rolling. That's why we're trying to plan these other meetings beyond the public hearings that we've had scheduled so far, even though I think we should schedule some smaller meetings, but we certainly need to get, I think, the feedback from, for lack of a better term, the professional organizations before so we can use that information.

And I think going into that, I think that should be certainly a give-and-take process. You know, they are going to provide us -- they're going to go specifically with the SPLC, they're going to go report the climate of fear. I think all of us should have gotten a copy of it, so I ask all of you to read it and be prepped on it and ask questions, you know, if you have any, and if you don't have it, we can e-mail it to you. But certainly, you know, be prepared to get as much information as you feel comfortable with and that you need. I want to ask the other organizations that are looking to present that they provide us the information beforehand so you have the opportunity to read it and go through it so you're looking at it while they're giving their presentations so that you have an understanding of what they're presenting, because I have gotten some information from the Anti-Defamation League. It's really interesting. They have some of their own programs that they conduct, but I only have one packet. We can get more information so we can hand it out to everyone. Anybody have any comments?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

The only thing I want to add, although I think it's a great idea if people are not coming to us, we should go to them, and I think that is a good idea. But I think we should also keep in mind, and I think I had this conversation with Reverend Pearson last week, that, you know, the fact we're not seeing as -- we're not seeing any victims or those that are negatively impacted by these crimes coming out and speaking, I don't think we should look at that as the hearings were unsuccessful. I think this is an example of the climate, and it tells us that there is a deep-rooted fear or distrust, and that is information in itself that we're going to have to take and put into our report, the fact that we didn't have victims come out and speak or they were not comfortable enough or didn't feel safe enough to come speak to us before us; that's something that we have to carry as information as well. I think that's something -- it says something to what's happening in our community.

So I don't think we should look at it as, well, if the victims aren't coming out, then we don't have anything to report because someone made a comment like that to me, and I don't think that's the case at all. I think that's just showing us what we're dealing with and we also are charged with looking at the roots of race and discrimination and what's causing these crimes, so we have to take that into account. The fact that people aren't coming out is an example of the climate and distrust that people have in government or in our criminal justice system, so we have to look at that and report that as well.

**RABBI MOSS:**

If I may add to that or comment is, is that that's why we have to go to the communities themselves, because each one is very different. Detective will know better, but if I'm still correct is that the majority of hate crimes are anti-Semitic. It used to be that; is that correct? By small numbers, but still the majority, statistically are anti-Semitic.

**DET. CASSIDY:**

Yes.

**RABBI MOSS:**

So if we were to meet, let us say, with members of the Jewish community, it's not likely that they are reticent because they distrust government or the police. That's not -- Thank God, you know, this is not Nazi, Germany, so we're not concerned about that. So the question is, where do they go, then, and how do they know what they know? The same thing I'm assuming most members today in this day and age within the African-American community, I would believe that there are reportings of it and they have -- you know, this is what you have to find out because each community is different and not all communities, because they didn't show up, are distrustful. The question is, how do they report? What are their avenues? And then hopefully, in our ultimate report is that we can then combine all this together to say, "Well, those communities who now feel more comfortable today which didn't at one time, how did that happen?" What are the sociological or the psychological elements that allow groups who at one point in time live in fear now begin to say, "You know something? I can develop lines of communication. There are means of trust," because, you know, we're always reinventing the wheel but, you know, almost every group that's come to this country in its history have gone through moments of fear, of not wonder -- of wondering where to go and how to deal with the issues that confront us and, ultimately, figure those things out somehow and become a part of what's going on.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I think that's actually a great comment, and I think that goes -- I think that's the benefit of having a diverse group such as the Task Force because we all have our own little niche, if you will, and we can probably better understand than other people as to how do we reach certain targeted groups. You know, the Jewish community, you may have a better understanding of how to get people in a room to talk about hate crimes as opposed to me or someone else. You know, me, I may have a better understanding as to reaching out to the African-American community. So I think that's -- so I think we need to maybe form a group or in some way and then try to, you know, target certain areas and reach out to certain people as to setting up these hearings and we certainly could --

**RABBI MOSS:**

I'll be willing to be a part of that or if you want a subcommittee, I'll volunteer because it's my idea.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right. I think that'll be good. Okay.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Are we -- somewhere along the line, I kind of, like, sensed that we're missing some of the actions -- we're looking at the post stuff, the stuff that happens when these hate crimes have already been

committed, but we're not addressing the pre. You know, like going into communities that just because they have not been reported of any hate crimes there, that doesn't mean the attitudes and the perceptions and the thoughts and all those things are not driven strongly there. They've just never been reported because they haven't done anything.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

That's actually -- that's actually one thing that I think working with the Hagedorn Foundation, I think they would be good at because they have information as to -- from what I'm being told. We're going to meet with them tomorrow.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

So I have a better understanding as to what information they have -- they may have information as to -- because I think they did a poll a couple years ago and it may be some information as to what -- you know, what --

**MS. ORTIZ:**

Perceptions.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

-- perceptions there are and what drives people to do hate crimes and the different targeted groups because we had talked before about doing a survey, and I think that information will be -- certainly as one of our functions is to find the resources. I think we should have some type of scientific analysis as to why hate crimes occur here in Suffolk County or Long Island. So I think we'll get the -- you know, we have -- we're trying to reach the post, but I think we'll have an understanding of what's the preconditions to set this environment that we're living in.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

If we were to do a poll or survey, what population, you know, do you think would be more advantageous to -- to attack?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Well, I think, according to Detective Sergeant Reecks' presentation, I think that given that 65% of the offenders are 13 to 19, I think that'll be -- should be a big component of the survey. I'm not a -- I don't do polls, but I would think that they would try to get a large sampling of that age group and then try to break it down into different age groups, but, certainly, if they're the main offenders, I would think that they would be a high priority, you know? But the question would be, how do we reach them? You're not going to call someone's house and say, "Can I speak to your 13-year-old son for 20 minutes while we do this poll?" You know, we're going to have to go into the schools or something. I don't know the methodology, how they would do that, but I think certainly that they would have to be reached out to.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Although it's an interesting population in -- I don't know if you're familiar with the program Stop Bias, but it's been in existence now for 17 years. The director -- and that's the only educational program in Suffolk County for bias crimes offenders. And during these 17 years, every person, juvenile or adult, who commits a bias crime was sent to this program, and it's a two-part program, and so we've had over 600 defendants come through the program, and I've met with every single one of them, and, again, the majority are between 13 and 19, and I would say out of the 600 including the adults, probably less than a dozen are what I would call true and outright bigots or racists on the adult side, even the young side.

We've had maybe less than a handful who claim to be members of, let us say, a hate group like skinheads or something. The majority of them, particularly the young people, and I'm not

minimizing the crimes and the incidents that occur by any means, but it's an acting out. And this is one of reasons why in the program we really deal with how to deal with our thoughts and our feelings and not to simply act impulsively on them. So it's not as if they come into a situation and say, "I hate Jews," or "I hate this group or that group. I'm out to get this person." An incident occurs, and then it leads to something else, or they find themselves, especially young people -- we had three 11-year-olds, who had broke -- on a winter's night, they ran away from home. They broke into a church, which is a bad enough crime, okay? And then they found themselves in the basement. They found spray paint, and they spray painted the basement of the church with graffiti including their own initials but also swastikas and, "We hate the Jews." This is in a church. So they came to the program. I said to them, "Why did you do that?" and they said, "We don't know. We had nothing else to do, so that thought came to our mind." And you can't -- of course, it's hard to believe, sometimes, things people do and the lack of responsibility, like, "I don't know why I wrote the swastika," "I don't know why I wrote the 'N' word on this sign," but that's the way some people behave, particularly young people.

So my concern would be about a poll like that is it's very critical because you're basically asking, "Why do you do what you do?" And there's -- any of us who have dealt with adolescence or for those of us here who have children, you know, hey, you know something? Sometimes they have no idea what they are doing, and they just act out. So I think the poll should really target older groups of people who at least have ideational type things that cause -- that motivate them in life. Although, it's amazing there, too, how many of them simply, they do something, and they have no idea why they really did it. I mean, it's not as if they went intentionally to do that. So that -- a perfect example is this 43-year-old man -- and this is days before cell phones -- who had to make an emergency phone call, and he stopped at a gas station in Patchogue, and this woman was on the public phone. Remember the old days of the phone booth and dial-up -- dialing? And so, anyway, he started to yell at her to get off the phone, and she said, "I'm on the phone. Give me a minute," and he thought she was Hispanic, so he started to make anti-Hispanic comments about her. Turned out to be she's Filipino.

Anyway, she felt threatened and told her friend that she was talking to to call the police because this guy was going to kill her. Anyway, he was arrested. I said to him, "Why did you do this?" He said, "I just lost it that night." Phone rage. He had to use that phone. It's not as if he went in there targeting this individual or woman or her perceived background. So we have to be really -- we have to work very hard, and maybe there are other organizations which do have surveys like this and we can look at them, but we have to really think a lot about that because otherwise, we're getting really misinformation, especially with young people. Hope that was helpful.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Right. No, I think that's important. I think that the way they can sample a poll is that they would make sure that they would get enough of that 13- to 19-year-old age group. And they -- demographically, they don't have all the -- they could have all the demographics, and -- and the polling that I have seen they can detail it as to, okay, 13- to 19-year-olds, they don't have a real reason why they do what they do, but, you know, 20 to 25, you know, white males are aggressive because of some ideology. African Americans are aggressive for whatever, whatever -- you know, they could break it down really into detail. So I don't think that's a problem. As far as getting a sample enough to --

**RABBI MOSS:**

Challenge.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

-- make it legitimate, I mean, that's more scientific and beyond my base skill. But I'm more interested in -- you know, you're saying there's a program that has over 600 people that have gone through the program and now they're identified as -- is this through a plea bargain, or probation --

**RABBI MOSS:**

Sentencing -- sentencing or probation -- through the Probation Department if they're juveniles, and everyone goes through probation ultimately, but it's through the courts. We have the cooperation with the judiciary, so whether it was district court or, in some cases, it was a criminal offense if it was a felony. Every person whose committed a biased -- been charged with a biased crime and committed -- and that's been what they're charged with and committed for that -- is that they're part of a sentencing or in terms of probation or sometimes is a part of ACOD, which is -- it's agreed upon before sentencing?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

It's like you're released on your own --

**MR. MOJICA:**

Adjournment in contemplation of dismissal.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Oh, in contemplation of dismissal.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

If you behave for, like, nine months, they'll just wipe it.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Right. So we've had all the different aspects of it, but, yes, it's through the judiciary and through probation with those departments' cooperation.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

So you're saying -- from what you're saying is over the past 17 years it's been in the neighborhood of 600 hate crimes.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Correct, yeah, or identified as such.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Wow. Right. So would your -- would this organization or program, would they have information as to the past few years?

**RABBI MOSS:**

Yes. We have statistics on what crimes were committed -- well, of course, the Police Department does also, but -- obviously, I can't give out names -- but we have the statistical breakdown on what crimes were committed and that kind of thing.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

Are we still talking about post-incidents? Because this is what my concern is. My concern is that, you know, there's a lot of things and there's a lot of statistics and reports on things that already happened. I thought what we're trying to do is try to address -- find out why they're happening and try to prevent them from happening, you know? So if we just go on the reports as for people who have been arrested, the offenders, and talk to them as to why they did that, that's all good, but then what about the younger ones or the ones who have not committed the crime yet or have thought about it or just never been caught?

**MS. ORTIZ:**

There was a gentleman that contacted the Legislature today to inquire about the Task Force and the public hearing next week. He's a retired teacher from Northport High School. Some of you might be

familiar with him. His name is Peter White, and he runs a program -- well, ran a program. He initiated a program in Northport called Students for 60,000, and we had a very interesting conversation today, and he -- he was sharing his input on his feelings about hate in Suffolk County and his ideas as to why these incidents have increased, and, you know, he feels strongly, of course. I'm sure many people share his sentiments that the base of it is due to the segregation in Suffolk County. But him coming from a -- him teaching in a district that is predominantly a Caucasian district, he thought it was very important that he teach, you know, diversity and expose these children to other diverse communities. So he takes -- he was taking these kids, a group of I guess about 30 kids annually to Nicaragua, and he told me he's going to come next week to the public hearing.

And now, again, I think this speaks to what Reynolds was saying -- just saying. This isn't about the post effects or about victims. This is about prevention and how we can educate our youth to stop these things from happening. So I told him I thought it was a great idea for him to come to the hearing and speak. He's going to bring some of the kids with him that participated in the program, and he said he's going to talk to them beforehand so that they can share with us what their perceptions were before participating in the program and their perceptions after. So he really thinks this program has been very successful at eliminating negative perceptions and, you know, exposing the kids to diverse environments, and I think that's the kind of stuff we should look at as well so that we can make recommendations on programs that can be implemented to educate our youth and as forms of prevention, not just, you know, running scared after things happen. So this gentleman will be coming down next week with some of -- the new director of the program and some of the students, and I think that it's -- it's very -- I think it will be very informative for us to hear from the kids directly about how this program affected them, so that's just -- I think that's similar to what you're talking about.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

And also with talking with the Anti-Defamation League and what they want to present before us and understanding a little bit about the programs that the Southern Poverty Law Center conducts. They do -- they have programs where they go into the schools and educational programs, and the ADL, in particular, they asked for my assistance in seeking funding into providing programs and to schools throughout -- there's age specific programs that they do and the SBLC, you know, they work in the school districts from what I understand as well, but they also work with law enforcement. So there are programs out there and I think that's part of the presentations that we'll be receiving. We'll have that information so everyone -- they'll have the understanding as to, you know, we see the post-effects, but here are some of the things and there are other reports with similar groups such as ours that have advocated, you know -- have seen the need for educational programs in the schools to talk about diversity and other things, and I think those organizations come before us with specifics about how they can have an impact in that way.

**MS. AHEARN:**

I actually -- I was on the Southern Poverty Law Center's website, and I saw that they had curriculum available, so we ordered every curriculum that they have available, so we'll be bringing that into the Task Force. Also, the agency, Crime Victims Center, what we've done is we've brought on an advocate dedicated to specifically hate crimes, and she was actually hired yesterday. She'll be part-time. She's being trained, and by January she should be full-time.

At the Crime Victims Center, what we see and also what I've seen here at the hearings is that for certain populations of crime victims, there are specialized support services that have been made available; for example, for victims of domestic violence or for victims of sex crimes, but we thought it would be a really great idea within the Crime Victims Center to set up the same type of support services for victims of hate crimes in every protective class. So we spoke with Chief Moore at the Police Department and he agreed that they would be willing to allow us to come into the precincts and to teach police officers about hate crimes and the different needs that victims of hate crimes might have compared to general population of crime victims.

Also that person will be on -- by January will be full-time, so the advocate has -- she's fully bilingual and very sensitive; taught at the NYPD Police Academy for 15 years; worked in probation; works in advocacy; works in education as well. She'll be doing outreach to all those organizations in Suffolk County mostly -- especially those that have articulated a concern that there are crime victims who are not receiving services or that we're not reaching. So she'll be doing outreach with PowerPoint presentations, bilingual, to those organizations and making herself and the agency available for crime victims' support services. So that's -- in terms of insuring that anybody who's been a victims of a crime will have crime victim compensation reimbursement for any expenses related to that crime and any support services that would be needed.

So it's -- it's an approach that we want to take at the Crime Victims Center that is not only outreach to educate those agencies about the services that are available from crime victims here in Suffolk County but also to help them to understand what the criminal justice process is because I think, as I have said before, at different meetings, there's -- I think from watching too many TV shows -- there's this idea that when you are a victim of you have higher expectations than what is real because as Bob -- as Detective Sergeant Reecks always says, a case doesn't get solved in a half an hour. So we're going to educate about the criminal justice process; about crime victim services that are available; about different types of support services that are available in the County besides victims services; the employment services that are available. For example, if somebody is afraid to report a crime because they are concerned that their employer might terminate them, there are alternatives that -- in their support services for those individuals. So also the training component is important because we'll be reminding those in law enforcement about the specialized needs that a certain population might have and also we're working on trying to do some additional outreach through the media.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Are you going to publicize that throughout the community once their -- once it's in full time?

**MS. AHEARN:**

We're actually -- we're compiling -- I see a couple of people out there that we've actually reached out to. We're asking for anybody who has any particular organizations they want us to do outreach to, to give us that list because we're already starting now to compile that list and we've drafted our first letter on crime victim services, and we'll be doing mailings and faxing and phone calling.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Are -- you're familiar with Bias Help? Because they've, not to this level, but over the years, my understanding is that they --

**MS. AHEARN:**

Yes.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Have always reached out to victims as support, so I don't know if it's good -- what?

**MS. AHEARN:**

They are on the list.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Okay. But in a sense, if they are still doing that now, you're doing that -- I guess maybe some coordination between the two or something like that. I don't know.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Yeah. I think that's important and something that sep -- that makes what we do very distinct is that we deal with all victims of crime, so we have a really good understanding of the criminal justice process plus we have social workers in the agency that provide support services, and every one of

our advocates is -- has received a minimum. It's a State certificate for rape crisis counseling, but what we've done is changed that certificate to -- it's about 100 hours of training our advocates have and that's ongoing, so everybody in the agency who is dealing with any victim of a crime has to have that level of certification, and the State's minimum is 40 hours; ours is 100. So that includes dealing with populations of victims across the board.

Now, whether it's a victim of a hate crime or a victim of a homicide or a victim of a sex crime or even a victim of identify theft, everybody has different needs. So what I see here developing is a really great approach to providing services to that specialized population, which we haven't seen. We've looked around the country to see if there's specific advocacy organizations dealing with this type of crime, and there are services available but not a comprehensive type of an approach that has been taken, say, for domestic violence victims or for sex crimes victims because we all recognize that those individuals that have specialized needs, but so do victims of hate crimes.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Well, it's amazing that that hasn't occurred because hate crimes have always been recognized as a special type of crime.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Right.

**RABBI MOSS:**

I mean, I'll never forget when the previous district attorney, Jim Catterson defined a hate crime as a violation of one's soul, so there should have been, you know, soulful support groups and programs like -- that's great.

**MS. AHEARN:**

Somebody, actually, in passing mentioned to me -- because a hate crime can also not be just somebody who's directly a victim of a violent crime but also a victim of a property crime. So you see the difference in terms of how a victim service provider would have to approach that because a property crime could be one that's a menorah keeps getting knocked down, and that's something that's effecting your whole community. But also a victim of a violent crime effects the whole community but in different ways, so an advocate has to be able to be responsive to that particular crime in what venue it's happening.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. All right. We briefly spoke about just the report. It's going to be in February. I just want everyone to kind of just, you know, start thinking about, you know, what we're going to have to do and what information we're going to need. We spoke about it briefly last time, but to give some more thought about it, we do have a little bit of time, so we're going to -- you know, before we draft any letters requesting information just -- I just ask again that -- to give some consideration. Obviously, I think we should get statistics from the Bias Help organization.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Stop Bias.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Stop Bias, I'm sorry. If you're saying that you have over 600 incidents, I think that would be important information we should do, and I think we'll get a lot of information from the presentations as well. But I do think that we need some -- the statistics and then, you know, whatever information we can get from the Hagedorn Foundation. I think that will help bring a scientific -- I don't want to say justification but analysis to the process that we can, you know, apply to the final report. And, you know, we certainly need to -- I don't know, what do you think? Somehow get information from the schools or how do you think we should approach that?

**MR. HAWKINS:**

I don't know. That's kind of difficult. I know we need to get something. As for how to go about getting it is a different story. I know I had suggested in the last meeting was doing some sort of a survey, you know, or just putting it out there and just seeing what kind of responses you get when the kids can kind of write honestly and anonymously, you know, or respond to questions, you know? Then you can get some kind of a feel as to what that community, you know, really feels, you know? And this is just coming from my own personal experience of growing up in Amityville and knowing there was certainly places of Massapequa and Lindenhurst I would not dare go to, you know? And these things are still very prevalent.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Psychologically-oriented, like, "How do you feel when you see someone of a different color or religion," that kind of a question? That's what you mean, like that?

**MR. HAWKINS:**

It could be. It could be questions like that, or it could be basic questions about has there ever been thoughts or conversations in your household about certain races or certain type of people or whatever.

**RABBI MOSS:**

That's tough to come up with the questions, more than a couple. Let me say this: I just want to suggest something. In the Islip Town, through the Islip's Anti-Bias Task Force, is that we started an ambassador program through the high schools of Islip Town, and this is where -- this is now the third year of the program, and last year we had four schools involved with this, almost 100 kids. So I have a captive audience, and they're kind of across the board. They run the gamut from Islip all the way to Central Islip, so in terms of the makeup of the young people, it's very diverse. And we're having our first Ambassador Orientation Program in the middle of next month, so if somehow, if you, we can come up with some questions that might solicit responses, I'd be glad to hand it out to this group and at least make a start there. I mean, I don't know how far we'll be on, you now, where we could go to in such a short amount of time, but if we can do that, I'd be glad to use the Ambassador Program in Islip.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

I think another organization may be -- I don't know if the Urban League has done anything like that or has surveys or anything. That would be another contact.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Now, how would the Task Force feel about having a public hearing specifically targeting school-aged children? I don't know what the response would be but, you know.

**MR. HAWKINS:**

I mean, you don't know. So that might be an open opportunity for some of these thoughts and ideas and whatever. Who knows what may come out of it? But that's the target area, though.

**REV. BARRETT:**

They -- the County is having a Unity Day on October 8th at Suffolk Community College, and the schools are coming in from all over Suffolk County that day. We can actually have a table there, and you can put out surveys right there and have the kids fill them out right when you're there. If someone wants to come down and sit at that, I can arrange a table at this event, and you let them know -- kids, we want to hear -- you know, their side of it.

**RABBI MOSS:**

What about have a speak-out place? In other words maybe -- I mean, a lot's going on that day.

We'd have to speak to Mel Guadelupe about this because I'm sure his day is kind of planned out now, so it would be like, "What?" Surprise. But maybe we could have a room and anyone is welcome to come in and give testimony and speak about the things that they've suffered in their lives.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

That sounds good. I think we have to do something more than just doing a survey because I think with this age group, you know, bias crime -- you know, what's that mean? You know, to them, that's a legal term. They're not going to understand the definition of it, but if you're in a forum where you can kind of explain what bias crime is, if you do something like or, you know, then you say, "Oh. Okay." Then maybe at that point, they'll honestly answer it, but at least they'll have a better understanding of what it is as opposed to just saying, "Fill out this survey," you know.

**RABBI MOSS:**

So maybe speak to Mel and see if we can become a part of what's going on Unity Day.

**[Dr. Kilmnick entered the meeting]**

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay.

**REV. BARRETT:**

Well, we definitely have room for a table.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

When is that?

**REV. BARRETT:**

That's October 8th at Suffolk Community College.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

In Brentwood?

**REV. BARRETT:**

Brentwood, yeah. That's next week, but the table can definitely be done. The Ashanti Fund, an organization on Long Island, is doing an event now. It's currently going on 13 different school districts, and their organization is promotion of peace through the work of Mahatma Gandhi, and I was at one of their events and the kids at Hauppauge High School had peace through music. Every school has a different thing: Peace through government, peace through education and all -- putting out all this effort. It's a tremendous, tremendous program, but the kids, the big thing that they brought up was about -- for hate, they were singing a song because it's through music. You have to be taught to hate, and this is the kids saying -- and the kids were saying that the reason why they know to hate is because they have been taught. So it was really profound to hear from them what -- you know, what they were thinking. So I thought that would be a good way to maybe even have the booth, you know, "We have to be taught to hate. How do you feel? Do you agree or disagree?" You know, "Put your input in." Some kind of thing like that where it might draw them to do it and get more frank ideas from them.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Yeah, we'll certainly give it consideration. It may be a little soon to do that -- I mean, or late given that it's next Thursday.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Hi, David.

**DR. KILMNICK:**

Hey. How are you? Sorry.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

We were just talking about maybe doing some type of forum or outreach to children, school-aged children specifically since they are the largest segment of offenders. You know, how can we -- should we go into the schools? There's a forum next week at the Brentwood campus of Suffolk Community College. You know, how do we get the feedback that we need from them so we can have a better understanding because, as Reynolds appropriately pointed out, there's a lot of talk about statistics and finding out where the crimes and things happen but not enough focus on how to do the prevention piece. And so part of the prevention piece is understanding where these feelings and all this hatred comes from.

**DR. KILMNICK:**

This could be an opportunity. It's not until November 17th, but Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth is having its annual conference, which is at Hofstra University, and they'll be about 300 to 350 young people that will be attending from both counties but many come from Suffolk County, so that's an opportunity if the Commission wants to do something there -- or we're a task force. The Task Force, sorry. Long drive in from Nassau. That's where I was.

**REV. BARRETT:**

I think these venues are what we were talking about earlier: Going to the people. So we have a venue right there and find some way to collect the information and get it and bring it back.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

All right. We already spoke about the public hearings. Rabbi Moss, you'll get a group together and try to focus on maybe some smaller venues so we can reach out to targeted group and try to get that information that we need.

**RABBI MOSS:**

Maybe if the members of the Task Force, if they wanted to maybe e-mail me. I don't think we've ever shared our information, e-mails, telephone numbers on the Task Force. Did we do that?

**MR. ROSE:**

Yes.

**RABBI MOSS:**

We did that already? Oh. Must be those pills I'm taking.

**[Laughter]**

Maybe we should do it again, I guess. Can we please do it again? If anyone wants to e-mail me ideas; for instance, what David just mentioned would be a perfect location. David, the thought was following up, I guess, your idea from last time is is to now go into certain communities and try to illicit hopefully on a more personal level, intimate level responses of what's going on in that community and maybe voices of those who've suffered. So if you have any ideas, I'll be glad to kind of put this together a little bit.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Well, thank you for volunteering, and thank everyone for coming here today. If anyone doesn't have any more comments, I think we'll adjourn. Sorry, David.

**[Laughter]**

Thank you, and we'll see everyone Tuesday October, 6th at the Brentwood campus, Suffolk Community College.

***[The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 P.M.]***