



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Scott Levin, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region

slevin@adl.org, 720-448-3966

Dana Juniel, Director of Strategy & Communications, Matthew Shepard Foundation

dana@matthewshepard.org, 720-771-7179

HATE CRIMES REACH RECORD HIGH IN COLORADO IN 2020

Hate crime reports were the highest in 30 years and surpassed a record set in 1992, according to the FBI's 2020 hate crime report

DENVER, CO, August 31, 2021 ... The number of reported hate crimes in Colorado in 2020 were the highest number ever recorded in a single year for the state, surging by nearly 34 percent between 2019 and 2020, according to the FBI's annual hate crime report released on Aug. 30.

In Colorado, there were 281 reported hate crimes in 2020 compared to 210 reported incidents in 2019. The number is the highest recorded in the past 30 years and surpassed the previous record of 261 hate crimes recorded in 1992. Hate crimes directed at individuals based on their race, sexual orientation and gender identity all increased in Colorado from 2019 to 2020, according to the report. [The FBI documented](#) 182 crimes based on race/ethnicity/ancestry, 48 based on sexual orientation, 34 based on religion, 9 based on gender-identity and 5 based on disability.

Nationally, [the FBI's annual Hate Crime Statistics Act \(HCSA\) report](#) reveals that 2020 saw a six percent increase in reported hate crimes from the previous year and represented the highest total in 12 years. In 2020, the FBI reported 7,759 hate crime incidents which is the most since 2008, when 7,783 hate crime incidents were reported. Reported hate crimes targeting Black people rose to 2,755 from 1,930 the prior year – representing a 43 percent increase. The number of anti-Asian hate crimes rose from 158 to 274.

Hate Free Colorado, a diverse coalition of advocacy and civil rights organizations, said more must be done to address the alarming trend of increased hate crimes and incidents in Colorado. The coalition was formed in 2017 to counter hate crimes in the state by educating the public about hate crimes and partnering with law enforcement to improve incident response and reporting.

Specifically, the coalition believes additional federal funding is needed to improve recordkeeping on hate crimes and expand anti-hate education and victims' services programming. Additional legislative measures that make it mandatory for state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies that receive federal funding to participate in the FBI's Hate Crimes Statistics data collection efforts may also be needed to obtain a more holistic understanding of the severity of hate crimes. Data drives policy and without a complete picture of the problem it is difficult to resolve the issues driving the surge in hate.

Coalition partner statements:

Scott Levin, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region:

"We are alarmed that reported hate crimes in Colorado are at the highest level in 30 years. This is a wake-up call that more must be done at the local, state and federal level to address the rise in hate. The solution must include all segments of society united behind the commitment that hate cannot and will not be tolerated."

Judy Shepard, Board Chair/President, Matthew Shepard Foundation:

"Not only are we alarmed by the continued increase in the number of reported hate crimes, but immensely disturbed that the number of law enforcement agencies participating in data collection has fallen for the second year in a row. Our communities deserve better."

Matthew T. Kirsch, Acting United States Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Colorado:

"Hate crimes tear at the very fabric of our communities by sowing mistrust and inspiring additional hate. These crimes also violate our constitution's guarantees of equality and freedom for all. The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue to work alongside the FBI, state and local law enforcement agencies, and community partners to improve hate crime reporting, develop effective training for hate crime investigations, and to vigorously prosecute criminal acts motivated by hate."

Phil Weiser, Colorado Attorney General:

"During the past year, we witnessed rising hate, increased demonization of individuals based on who they are, and rising violence motivated by hate. We cannot stand idly by as observers. As individuals and agencies, we must call out hate crimes, improve our ability to report them effectively, and be vigilant in the face of threats. We will continue working with coalition partners to do all we can to support such action."

Beth McCann, District Attorney, Second Judicial District:

"The surge in hate crimes should offend everyone who cares about living in a just society. This is why we are committed to vigorously prosecuting these offenders and supporting victims of hate and bias."

Michael Dougherty, District Attorney, Twentieth Judicial District:

"The continued increase in reported hate crimes in Colorado is alarming. We must continue the vigilance in preventing these senseless crimes and prosecuting the offenders. We appreciate the collaboration with Hate Free Colorado, the ADL, Out Boulder, and our law enforcement partners. This will continue to be a priority for our office and for Boulder County."

John Kellner, District Attorney, Eighteenth Judicial District:

"This year I was proud to launch a team of prosecutors specializing in hate crimes. I also supported SB 280, which ensures that people who commit bias-motivated crimes are held accountable and that their victims are treated with dignity and respect. We will continue to support Hate Free Colorado and to prosecute these cases aggressively."

Alexis King, District Attorney, First Judicial District:

"It is our job to help create a safe and healthy community for everyone – regardless of who they are, where they're from, what they believe, who they choose to love and how they identify. While the incident numbers are disturbing, our community can have full confidence in our office to aggressively prosecute bias-motivated crimes and proactively work to improve our response to marginalized communities."

Rex Fuller, CEO, The Center on Colfax:

"We are alarmed at the shocking increase in hate crimes in our state. Racist and xenophobic language from some of our political leaders compounded by false and misleading information about our national elections and the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to a toxic and frightening atmosphere for many individuals in our community. We cannot forget that we have also seen a dramatic rise in deadly attacks on individuals in the transgender community, which is also paired with fear mongering among some political leaders. The fact that the number of cases in this report represents an undercount of actual cases because law enforcement agencies fail to accurately report what is happening in our communities is unacceptable."

Julie Reiskin, Executive Director, Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition:

"The Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition is saddened but not surprised that hate crimes continue to be all too prevalent in our country. As long as our national psyche clings to the delusion that different is bad or dangerous we will continue to suffer as a society."

Dr. Michael Cortés, Executive Director, Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy & Research Organization (CLLARO):

"Hate crimes are anathema to Latinos and everyone else who cares about social justice and human rights. CLLARO joins with ADL and all other like-minded organizations in expressing alarm over increases in hate crimes reported by the FBI. We demand that law enforcement agencies and our fellow citizens join us in taking this trend seriously and doing everything possible to reverse it."

Max Murray, Program Coordinator, Colorado Resilience Collaborative:

"The Colorado Resilience Collaborative remains alarmed by the continued trends in hate crimes and other bias-motivated violence in Colorado. We believe that increased protections for those who are targeted, coupled with strengths-based prevention practices for those at risk of engagement in violence should be priorities in our communities in order to not only address these trends in violence but also change the inequitable circumstances that give rise to them."

Dilpreet Jammu, Executive Director, Colorado Sikhs:

"Every year, I try to find a silver lining in a report that examines hate crimes in our state, and in our nation. It is a sad fact that 2020 saw another double-digit growth (34% over 2019) in violence based on

immigration, race, religion, color, gender, and gender identity. Colorado is better than this, and we can do more to defend the dignity of our citizens.”

Shara Smith, Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance of Colorado:

“The alarming fact that hate crimes increased by 74% in 2019 and by another 34% in 2020 underscore the need for us all to address and dismantle systems of oppression and hate. We denounce all bias-motivated crimes and reject a culture that targets a person's race, sex, sexuality, religion, identity, ethnicity, national origin, economic status or any other aspect of their identity for violence. We join our Hate Free Colorado partners to uplift human dignity, reject white supremacy culture, build the beloved community, and create a more just, safe, and equitable Colorado for us all.”

Nadine Bridges, Executive Director, One Colorado:

“Incidents of hate crimes are increasing in Colorado, especially against Black and Brown Coloradans, and One Colorado is committed to the crucial work ahead of protecting our community. Hate crimes committed on the basis of the victim’s sexual orientation or gender identity were the second most reported reason for an attack, making up 1 out of every 6 hates crimes committed in Colorado. We know that violence disproportionately impacts transgender women of color at the intersections of racism, sexism, and transphobia, and at least 35 transgender or gender non-conforming people have been murdered in 2021 in our country. One Colorado mourns the lives lost and continues to advocate for the safety and wellbeing of all LGBTQ Coloradans, especially those whose lives are threatened by hatred and bigotry.”

Mardi Moore, Executive Director, Out Boulder County:

“The increase in hate crimes targeting the LGBTQ community demonstrates that there is much work to do to ensure that LGBTQ individuals are truly safe. The struggle for LGBTQ equality didn't stop with marriage equality. LGBTQ Coloradans should be able to walk down the street without fear of being attacked for who they are and who they love.”

Hate Free Colorado partner organizations:

American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado
American Friends Service Committee
Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region
Asian Pacific Development Center
The Center on Colfax
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy & Research Organization
Colorado Resilience Collaborative
Colorado Sikhs
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Meet the Middle East
Multicultural Mosaic Foundation
NAACP – Aurora Branch
NAACP CO-MT-Wyoming State Conference
One Colorado

Out Boulder County

Law Enforcement Partners:

Boulder Police Department

Colorado Attorney General's Office

Denver Police Department

Eighteenth Judicial District Attorney's Office (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln)

Federal Bureau of Investigation – Denver Field Office

First Judicial District Attorney's Office (Gilpin/Jefferson)

Second Judicial District Attorney's Office (Denver)

Twentieth Judicial District Attorney's Office (Boulder)

U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado

###