

# **Response to Campus Racist Incidents: Institutional Successes—Best Practices**

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# Overview

- **Best Practices: Higher Education Context**
- **Best Practices: Definitional Issues**
- **Best Practices: Criteria**
- **Best Practices: An Example**
- **Conclusions**

# Higher Education Context

- Colleges and universities are large and complex institutions.
- Administrative lines of authority for decision making and action are often de-centralized.
- Universities have inherent obligations to uphold academic freedom and freedom of expression while simultaneously protecting the safety of students, faculty and staff.
- The reputational paradigm of higher education status, prestige and marketing requires intensive attention to the costs and consequences of publicity.
- Clery Act makes hate crime reporting a requirement, but...

# Hate Crime versus Bias Incident

- ***A hate crime*** as a crime which in whole or part is motivated by the offender's bias toward the victim's status because they are perceived to be different with respect to their race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or disability.
- ***A hate incident or bias incident*** is an action in which a person is made aware that her/his status is offensive to another, but does not rise to the level of a crime.

# Hate Incidents on Campus

- **Accurate data on the prevalence of hate crimes and bias incidents on college campuses are not comprehensive, because they are based on information from relatively few reporting campuses (FBI, 2001).**
- **According to Tolerance.org:**
  - **Over 500,000 college students are targets of biased slurs and physical assaults every year**
  - **At least one hate crime occurs daily on a college campus**
    - **Race and ethnicity are the most common targets**
    - **Anti-Semitism and Sexual Orientation are also common**
    - **Anti-Islamic bias and crimes have increased substantially**
    - **Anti-immigration has become a major focus among Nativist groups**
  - **On some campuses college students observe biased words or images every day**

# **Long-Term Mental Health Impact of Hate Crimes**

- **Victims of hate crimes are at heightened risk for psychological distress beyond that of the consequences of violent crime in general (Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999; Sulloway, 2004).**
- **Psychological distress following victimization by hate crime can include depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (Bisson & Shepherd, 1995; Weaver & Club, 1995).**

# **Impact on the Community that Shares the Victim's Identity**

- **Hate crimes threaten the group that the victim belongs to in addition to the particular individual (Sullaway, 2004).**
- **Members of a community targeted because of a central identity (e.g., one's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) may feel less safe after a fellow group member is targeted (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino, 2002).**
- **Witnessing discrimination against someone who is from the same group as oneself (e.g., same gender, ethnicity) can lead to depressed emotion and lower self-esteem (McCoy & Major, 2003).**

# **Best Practices: Definitional Issues**

- **“Best practices” are NOT whether all stakeholders or all constituency groups are satisfied with outcomes. Why?**
- **The range of different types and characteristics of racist incidents make it difficult to establish standard practices or produce consistent outcomes.**
- **“Perspective” is a critical determinant of whether responses are considered to be “best,” and by whom.**

# Best Practices

- Some practices are bad, some are good, some are better, but only a small number will ultimately be considered “best.”



# Best Practices: Proactive

- Evaluate policies and procedures for reporting and resolving hate crimes and bias incidents
- Implement effective training of administrators, counselors, police, staff, and faculty members
  - Provide ongoing training
  - Evaluate and vet prospective trainers
- Provide campus services
  - Accessible campus-wide bias reporting system (<http://biasreport.missouri.edu/>)
  - Mediation/reconciliation (on campus or through DOJ)
  - Bias response teams
- Facilitate alliance building on campus

# Best Practices: Proactive

- **Gather on-going information (not just during crises)**
  - Understand history/perceptions on campus
  - Assess satisfaction and needs of under-represented groups
- **Offer prevention education for entire community**
  - Peer education programs at Texas A & M
  - UC Berkeley Hate Crimes Awareness & Prevention Project
  - National Student Colloquium at Northeastern University and University of Southern Maine
  - Carbondale Conversations for Community Alliance
- **Establish a communications plan designed to promote a rapid and effective response to a variety of types of events.**
  - Communication must be central and promote transparency
  - Involves all parties in meaningful dialogue

# Best Practices: Responsive

- **Provide campus-wide response**
  - Remain responsive, not reactive
  - Immediacy of response when events occur
  - Response is proportional to the incident/crime
  - Open letters to campus
  - Community meetings, town hall events, creative outlets
- **Follow-through to stakeholders and affected parties**
  - Protecting and assisting victims/survivors
  - Extending assistance and follow-through to communities and stakeholders
- **Address local and campus media coverage**
- **Review efforts and sustain positive outcomes**

**AN EXAMPLE**

# ANATOMY OF A RIOT



# Columbia, Missouri

## February 20, 2007

A parade permit filed with the Columbia Police Department said the National Socialist Movement intended to "protest the promotion of Marxism by the University of Missouri."



Source: ColumbiaTribune.com

# Toledo, Ohio

## Saturday, October 15, 2005

Members of the National Socialist Movement, which identifies itself as 'America's Nazi Party,' harass counter-protestors on the grounds of Woodward High School, with a 68% African American student body.



Source: CNN.com

# Toledo, Ohio

## Saturday, October 15, 2005

**A teenager is apprehended for allegedly throwing rocks at members of the neo-Nazi group and at the police. The teen was seized by mounted police and arrested, which set off a riot.**



Source: CNN.com

# Toledo, Ohio

## Saturday, October 15, 2005

Police arrested more than 120 rioters, most of whom were local area residents, but none of the 80 neo-Nazi members were arrested. Damages were in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Source: CNN.com

# Columbia, Missouri

## March 3, 2007

University and community leaders came together with law enforcement and city officials to support a nonviolent response. Community leaders devised an anti-violence campaign designed to raise awareness and aimed at prevention.



Source: ColumbiaTribune.com

# **Mobilizing a Campus Response**

## **March 3, 2007**

### **Nazi Group Comes to Columbia: What Should We Do?**

**An open letter to the campus community by  
the MU Chief Diversity Officer**

<http://diversity.missouri.edu/news/2007/0305-nazi-group.html>

# Campus and Community Events

- **\*Spark in the Park\*** at Douglass Park
- **\*Inter-Faith Religious Leaders march along parade route.**
- **\*NAACP rally on County Courthouse steps.**
- **\*Forum Theatre movies for just \$4.50!**
- **\*2 for 1 special at Empire Roller Rink**
- **\*Free Concert!!**
- **\*Theatre of the Oppressed performance based on the poem "First they came . . ." by Niemuller**
- **\*Students Advocating a Multicultural Experience is holding an open forum on Neo-Nazism and hate groups in America**
- **\*Hate Wall Demonstration**
- **\*On-Campus Student Street Festival**
- **\*Native American Indian cleansing ritual along parade route after march**

# Columbia Acceptance Project



J.W. Blind Boone Home



<http://tolerance.homestead.com>

# Columbia, Missouri

## March 10, 2007

The event at Frederick Douglass Park was scheduled to run from noon to 5 p.m., the same time frame that the parade permit allowed the neo-Nazis to march near the University of Missouri campus.



Source: ColumbiaTribune.com

# Columbia, Missouri

## March 10, 2007

Although there was some shoving and a great deal of yelling, there was little violence, in part due to an overwhelming presence of law enforcement, including riot squads, a SWAT team, mounted police, and a helicopter.



Source: ColumbiaTribune.com

# Columbia, Missouri

## March 10, 2007

Seven people were arrested, and police used pepper spray to separate counter-demonstrators from the marchers, but the parade took place without significant injury or damage to the city or the university.



Source: ColumbiaTribune.com

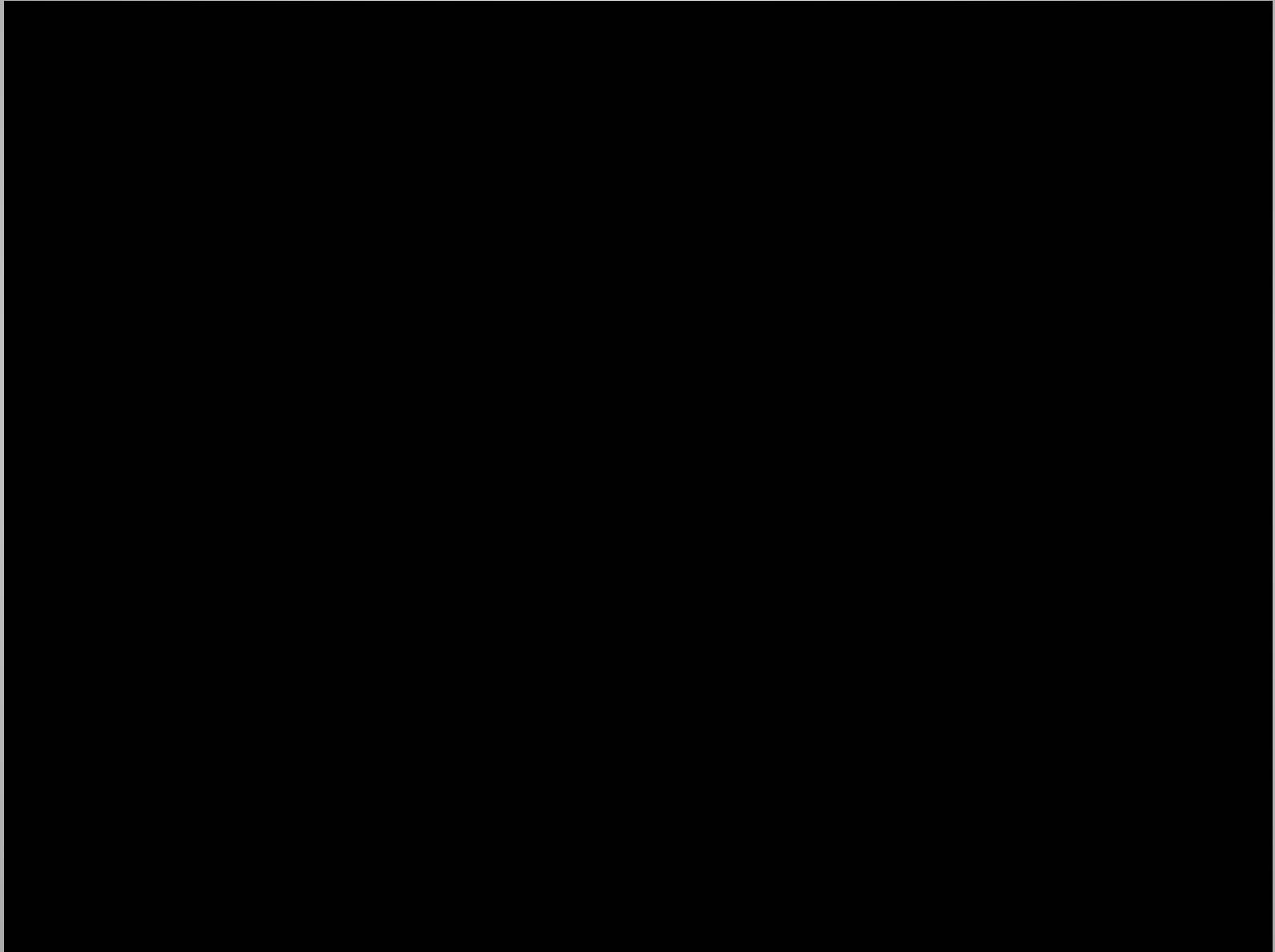
# Columbia, Missouri

## March 10, 2007



**None of the seven individuals arrested were from the University community, and none had local addresses. Arrest records indicated that they were from as far away as Vermont and Indiana, or came from other parts of Missouri, including St. Louis.**

**ANOTHER EXAMPLE?**





# CONCLUSIONS

- Consider campus context
- Be proactive
- Provide advance training to campus responders
- Immediacy of action
- Pursue ethics over good PR → accept criticism
- Inclusive, coordinated responses
- Multiple communication streams
- Avoid over-control
- Turn lemons into lemonade
- Identify teachable moments
- Review efforts and sustain positive outcomes

# Difficult Dialogues



Promoting  
Pluralism and  
Academic Freedom  
on Campus

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# Resources

- **Hate Crimes on Campus (U.S. Dept of Justice, 2001)**
- **Southern Poverty Law Center ([www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org))**
- **Tolerance.org**
- **CNN.com**
- **OrlandoSentinel.com**
- **ColumbiaTribune.com**