

American Hate: Lessons from Survivors

BY ALISON KYSIA

This lesson raises awareness of hate crimes and their impact through survivor testimonials included in [American Hate: Survivors Speak Out](#), edited by Arjun Singh Sethi (The New Press, 2018).

[Hate crimes](#) and [hate groups](#) are increasing, including in [schools](#). According to the FBI, there were 7,175 hate crimes in 2017, representing a 17 percent increase from 2016. While this statistic is alarming, the [real number](#) of hate crimes in 2017 was closer to 250,000.

Through a mystery activity, participants investigate why hate crimes are underreported and undercounted. Participants create an intervention project based on the recommendations of survivors. As a result, they

learn about the positive role that activism can have in their lives and the lives of others.

This lesson is included in the “Islamophobia: a people’s history teaching guide” because Muslims are one of many groups who have experienced an increase in hate crimes. Anti-Muslim hate groups [grew](#) from five in 2010 to 114 in 2017. Anti-Muslim assaults [rose](#) significantly between 2015 and 2016, exceeding the number of assaults reported in the year after the 9/11 attacks. Muslim children are [more likely](#) to be bullied in school than children of other faiths. In this lesson, participants learn who else is being targeted in the rising nationalist tide and what they can do about it.



Objectives: Participants will . . .

- Learn about current hate crimes and their impact through stories in [American Hate: Survivors Speak Out](#).
- Investigate hate crime data collection.
- Create an intervention project based on the recommendations of hate crime survivors.
- » Chapter 1: Asmaa Albukaie
- » Chapter 2: Taylor Dumpson
- » Chapter 9: Harjit Kaur
- » Chapter 11: Dominick Evans

Materials

- Copies of chapter 10, “Destinee Mangum and Walia Mohamed,” from [American Hate: Survivors Speak Out](#), one for each participant.
- Copies of four chapters for each folder, one for each member of the small group:
 - » Blank paper
 - » Highlighter pens
 - » Chart paper
 - » Sticky notes

Time Required: 4-6 hours

Note: This lesson is designed for middle school and high school students. It can also be easily used with adult learners in undergraduate classrooms, activist trainings, and public dialogue projects. The stories in this lesson are graphic and can trigger strong reactions and emotions for multiple reasons. It is important that teachers read all of the material in this lesson before presenting it to participants in order to think ahead about modifications and warnings that are appropriate for a particular group.

Part 1: Hate Crime in Portland, Oregon

Suggested Procedure

1) Tell participants: We are going to learn about hate crimes in the United States since 2016. [Hate crimes](#) and [hate groups](#) are increasing, including in [schools](#). According to the FBI, there were 7,175 hate crimes in 2017, representing a 17 percent increase from 2016. While this statistic is alarming, the [real number](#) of hate crimes in 2017 was closer to 250,000. Later in the activity, we will talk about why the numbers differ so dramatically.

What is a hate crime? Ask participants to offer what they know or think they know. (According to the [FBI](#), “a hate crime is a traditional offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias.” For the purposes of collecting statistics, the FBI has defined a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.”)

The stories that you hear today can trigger a range of reactions (see note above). The essential question of this lesson is: What do we do with the information we learn about in these stories? But first we need to learn the stories.

2.) What happened in Portland, Oregon on May 26, 2017? Ask participants to take notes as the whole group watches two short videos about a hate

crime. What is the story? (Who? What? When? Where? Why?)

- “Portland honors heroes stabbed on train,” CBS Evening News, May 28, 2017 (youtu.be/CnlgfHkXqUo).
- “Honoring the victims of the MAX attack,” KGW8, May 26, 2018 (kgw.com/video/news/local/honoring-the-victims-of-the-max-attack/283-8141714).

Ask participants to pair up with another participant. Explain: Spend one minute reconstructing the story. What did you find interesting or surprising? What questions do you have? If you had to choose one emotion after viewing this, which emotion would you choose and why?

Then, as a whole group, ask participants: What happened in Portland? Tell me the story. Ask participants to add details. Record their responses on chart paper. Save the chart paper for direction #5 below.

The man who committed this crime, Jeremy Joseph Christian, identifies as a white nationalist. What does that mean? (A white nationalist is one of a group of militant whites who espouses white supremacy and advocates enforced racial segregation; read more at SPLC: splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/white-nationalist)

3.) Explain: In the videos you watched, we did not hear from the women who were being targeted on the train. You will have a chance now to read a story with their voices. Give each participant a copy of chapter 10, “Destinee Mangum and Walia Mohamed,” from *American Hate* (p.115-122). Give them each a highlighter pen. Explain (list these directions on the whiteboard): Read the chapter quietly. While reading, highlight the most potent lines — statements that grab your attention, make you ask a question, or make you feel a strong emotion. After you are done reading, take out a piece of paper and write three reactions and three questions. Then, go through the chapter again and look at the lines you highlighted. Choose five.

In the sidebar or on your paper, explain why you chose each line.

4.) After participants complete #3, begin a silent discussion. A silent discussion is an inclusive teaching strategy, particularly for participants who don't feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. Silent discussion makes space for dissent. It also gives participants an opportunity to learn how not to react, but rather reflect on their own thoughts and emotions and share in a respectful way. (See, for example, "Fahrenheit 9/11: Silent Discussion" by Julie O'Neill, Sandra Childs, and Bill Bigelow in *Teaching About the Wars*, Ed. Jody Sokolower, p.90-91.)

Select 8-10 important quotes from the text or questions you want participants to contemplate. Passages should be thought-provoking and push participants to expand or clarify their thinking. You can choose your own questions and quotes or use these from *American Hate*, chapter 10:

For like eight minutes, he just yelled at us: "You're nothing"; "Kill yourself"; "Get out of this country"; "Burn." . . . "Muslims should die." "Go back to Saudi Arabia." I felt like he was attacking me because I was wearing hijab; Destinee was wearing something on her head, too. He was yelling stuff about Muslims and Christians as well. Plus, we're both Black.

I also remember that when Christian was yelling, there was another white guy vouching for him. He was standing right behind him and saying yes to everything Christian was saying.

Before Ricky, Taliesin, and Micah intervened, nobody said nothing. Nobody did anything. There's an emergency button. Nobody pushed it.

Everywhere I go, I fear for my safety. I'm a Somali immigrant and I decided to take off my hijab a few months ago because I don't feel safe. I feel like I'm going to get attacked again.

The Hispanics are being bullied in school and on social media. There are all these memes online about how Trump said they need to work on the border and build the wall. It's unfair and cruel.

Our school was really supportive immediately after the incident. The security guards cried when they saw me. Every single teacher that saw me in the hallway said, "Oh my God. I'm so sorry." . . . But at our new school, the reaction has been different. This school doesn't care.

I don't like going to benefit concerts, fundraisers, and stuff like that because every time it's been a let-down. Money is being raised for us, but we don't know where it's going. It's like a reality check.

They just want a story. Reporters and politicians want the attention. They care about the story so it can go viral and get lots of views and shares. Because when they get the story, they just leave. We don't hear from them again. It hurts.

I've received calls and messages on Facebook and Instagram, saying things like, "I'm going to hunt you down and kill you. You don't deserve to be alive." Sometimes they call me a "nigger." I just block them and try to forget about it. But what if they do come after me?

I told the police about the threats around the time of the grand jury, and they told me it would be okay. They said the aggressors were hiding behind screens and wouldn't do anything. After I insisted, they said they would watch my house, but I don't think they ever watched it.

I feel like at some point Walia and I should talk about it more and go to therapy together. . . . We've tried to forget about it. But we can't forget about it. We're reminded of it every day.

No matter where we go. Walia's my sister and my best friend. . . . She'll (Destinee) always be

my sister. No matter what. She's always going to be my family.

Write each of 8-10 quotes or questions on a separate piece of chart paper. The papers should be large enough so there is plenty of room for participant comments. Post the chart paper in different spots around the room so participants don't congregate in one space. Participants need time to read the quotes and questions, respond on the chart paper or on sticky notes, and then respond to others' responses (this is how you build the silent discussion). It is best not to rush because the point of this activity is to give participants time to process what they read, what they are thinking and feeling, and the reactions of other participants. Reiterate that this is a silent process.

5.) Explain: Every participant must respond to at least three quotes or questions and at least three responses. How might you respond? With another question, or rebuttal, or detailed agreement. Instead of writing "I agree," you need to explain why and add something to the conversation. You have to sign or initial your responses. This activity isn't about anonymity, we are having a conversation on paper. We will have a class discussion following the activity.

The teacher facilitates the activity, ensuring that participants first comment on at least three of the initial quotes or questions and then respond to at least three comments, encouraging them to clarify vague word choices. As participants are silently discussing, the teacher identifies threads to highlight in the class discussion that follows. The teacher guides the discussion as long as it is productive. Keep the chart paper for "Part 4: Intervention Campaign" because students may want to review the notes to complete the activity. After class discussion, point to the chart paper created in direction #2 above. Ask participants the following questions: What would you have missed if you didn't read the testimonial of Destiny and Walia? Did the news program give you all the details you needed to understand this story?

Part 2: Learning and Sharing More Stories

Suggested Procedure

1.) Ask participants to sit in four small groups. Give each group a folder. Explain: Each group is going to read another story from this book. As you read your group's story quietly to yourself, highlight the most potent lines — statements that grab your attention, make you ask a question, or make you feel a strong emotion. After you are done reading, go through the chapter again and look at the lines you highlighted. Choose five. In the sidebar or on a piece of paper, explain why you chose each line. Discuss in your small group by having one member at a time share a line and explain why they chose it (for one minute each).

2.) Ask participants to work on the worksheet in the folder; each participant fills out their own but the group discusses jointly. The teacher circulates around the room, checking on participant progress.

3.) Once group discussions are finished, ask one member of each group to form a new group (count off in fours to form jigsaw groups). In the new group, each participant shares their survivor's story, using the information on the worksheet to keep the conversation moving. Each participant has five minutes to explain the story and allow for questions.

4.) Come back together as a large group. Discuss: We started with the story of Destiny Mangum and Walia Mohamed, who were targeted for being Black, young, Muslim women. Which other identities made people targets of hate? What kind of hate crimes did you hear about in these stories? How do these stories connect? Why do you think we are seeing a rise in hate crimes in the United States? What kinds of recommendations did you hear from the survivors? What policies or strategies do they suggest creating in the future to prevent hate crimes? Make a list on chart paper to use in "Part 4: Intervention Campaign."

Part 3: Annual Number of Hate Crimes

Suggested Procedure

1.) As we discussed in the beginning of the lesson, the FBI reported that there were [7,175](#) hate crimes in the United States in 2017. This is the highest number recorded in the last ten years. It is also a 17 percent increase from 2016. The data show hate is intensifying nationwide. But the FBI's number is very low. The real number of hate crimes is approximately [250,000](#), or a quarter of a million, every year. Some of the crimes you learned about in this lesson were not included in the FBI's recent statistics. Why not? That is the mystery we want to solve.

2.) Give each participant a “Mystery of Hate Crime Data Collection” worksheet (see below), which includes questions to guide their inquiry. Cut up each of the clues and give one to each participant (you will need to replicate clues if you have more than 11 participants). Give participants time to read their clue and translate it in their own words, looking up or asking about the meaning of words they don't understand.

Explain: In order to answer the questions on the worksheet, you will meet with other participants to collect information. Clues can only be shared verbally — no handing over clues to another participant — and the conversation has to be one-on-one to encourage maximum participation (no small group conversations). You cannot sit at your desk and wait for visitors — you must get out of your seat.

3.) Bring the whole group back and review the mystery questions together. Deepen the inquiry by asking: What suggestions do you have to fix the problems you learned about in this activity?

Part 4: Intervention Campaign

Suggested Procedure

1.) Refer back to the chart paper from “Part 2: Learning and Sharing More Stories,” #4, where participants listed survivors' recommendations on interventions. Ask participants to read the recommendations out loud to refresh their memories.

2.) Copy *American Hate*, p.151-176. Cut up the suggestions in strips (prior to the activity the teacher should choose which strategies to highlight). Ask participants to discuss in pairs: What is the strategy? How could you participate in and support this strategy? After discussing in pairs, ask participants to explain the strategies they talked about. Which strategies are you most attracted to? Why?

3.) Participants create a campaign based on one of the survivor recommendations. The teacher has multiple options to execute this activity. Teachers can group participants based on their favorite strategy or they can assign groups. Another option is to collaborate on a project with a local or national organization working on hate crime prevention and intervention. Teachers can create local-focused projects based on crimes that have occurred in their community. In collaboration with the art teacher, participants can create a gallery walk of poetry and art similar to the online collection by the [OCA-NY Asian Pacific American Advocates](#). More suggestions on art activism can be found in the article “[Art + Action: Creating a Platform for Social Justice](#)” by Jack Watson. If you have not worked on a campaign with participants before, these references will help you get started: [socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/organizing](#).

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FOLDER 1

Chapter 1: Asmaa Albukaie

1. When did she arrive in the United States?
2. What was her life like in Syria?
3. What did she face during the war?
4. What was her experience in Egypt?
5. What was Boise, Idaho like when they first arrived?
6. What was it like for Asmaa to wear hijab?
7. What happened to Asmaa's son in February 2016?
8. How did the incident affect her son in the long term?
9. What identity/identities was/were targeted in this story?
10. What was Asmaa's response? What suggestions does she have to reduce hate in the future?
11. Retelling the story: Using the information above, explain this story to the members of your jigsaw group.

FOLDER 2

Chapter 2: Taylor Dumpson

1. Describe some of the racist experiences Taylor faced growing up.
2. How did the murder of Trayvon Martin change her life?
3. What hate crime occurred on her college campus during her junior year?
4. What identity/identities was/were targeted in this story?
5. Taylor won the student government presidency on April 30, 2017. What happened on May 1?
6. What role did Taylor's parents play in this story?
7. What is cybertrolling? Describe what happened when Taylor was cybertrrolled by the Daily Stormer?
8. How did cybertrolling by the Daily Stormer affect Taylor's health?
9. List the examples Taylor uses to describe the ways she felt supported during these hateful experiences she had.
10. How does Taylor think we should fight hate moving forward?
11. Retelling the story: Using the information above, explain this story to the members of your jigsaw group.

FOLDER 3

Chapter 9: Harjit Kaur

1. How was Akal treated at school?
2. What was the role of bystanders?
3. What is Sikhism?
4. What was the role of the teacher?
5. What were the consequences on Akal's life?
6. How did Akal's parents react?
7. How did Harjit intervene? What did she do? List her interventions.
8. How did Akal participate in the interventions?
9. How did some parents react to Harjit's class presentation on Sikhism?
10. How has hate affected the Sikh community?
11. What identity/identities was/were targeted in this story?
12. Retelling the story: Using the information above, explain this story to the members of your jigsaw group.

FOLDER 4

Chapter 11: Dominick Evans

1. How does Dominick identify? Why and how did Dominick alter the way he identifies?
2. Interpret this quote in your own words: “We all know that white supremacists target racial and religious minorities, but they’re often transphobic and homophobic, as well” (p.123-124).
3. Why does Dominick use a wheelchair? How old was he when he started using it?
4. How did his mother deal with his disability?
5. Does Dominick see his wheelchair as a burden?
6. How was he bullied? Provide as many examples as you can.
7. Was school a safe place? How did his teachers and other students treat him?
8. What role did his grandparents play in his life?
9. What does he mean when he says he internalized ableism?
10. What happened when Dominick learned more about the trans community?
11. What kind of daily harassment does Dominick face?
12. How does Dominick challenge hate?
13. Retelling the story: Using the information above, explain this story to the members of your jigsaw group.

Mystery of Hate Crime Data Collection

1. Who is supposed to collect data on hate crimes?
2. Do police officers get training on how to identify and investigate hate crimes? How many states require this training?
3. How do stereotypes about Muslims affect hate crime training?
4. What about city and county law enforcement agencies? Are they reporting hate crimes to the FBI?
5. What are some of the explanations for these problems in hate crimes reporting?
6. What is the role of Congress?
7. What are some of the risks victims of hate crimes face for reporting?
8. How have hate crime survivors responded to their victimization, despite a lack of trust of the police?
9. Who is a greater threat, Muslims or white supremacists?

Clues for the Mystery of Hate Crime Data Collection

The following clues are taken from “[The FBI recorded a surge of hate crimes last year. But it undercounted — by a lot](#)” by Arjun Singh Sethi, Washington Post, November 14, 2018, and “[Does Islamophobia Impact the Underreporting of FBI Hate Crime Data?](#)” by Kristin Garrity Şekerçi, The Bridge Initiative, December 14, 2017.

Cut up the following list of clues and give one to each participant, replicating clues depending on the number of participants.

Under the 1990 [Hate Crime Statistics Act](#), the Department of Justice is required to compile data on “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.” The job falls to the FBI, which releases an annual report. But the FBI depends on a huge range of law enforcement organizations to report hate crimes — and the data from these organizations is completely unreliable.

Only 12 states have statutes that require police academies to teach prospective police officers about hate crimes. Additionally, at least seven states (Alaska, Georgia, Idaho, Nevada, Missouri, South Dakota, and Texas) have no requirements for law enforcement hate crime training whatsoever. Of the states that do provide training, officials in Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Washington reported that recruits spend approximately 30 minutes total on hate crime instruction. In Alaska, state officials were not aware that Alaska even had a hate crime statute, and in Kansas, training materials made no mention of the state’s hate crime statute.

A longstanding federal training program that used to send experts around the country to teach police how to respond to hate crimes was abandoned during the Obama administration because local authorities wanted to concentrate more on Islamist violent extremism rather than white supremacist violence.

Rather than focus on the serious threat of white supremacist violence, some hate crime trainers are anti-Muslim and anti-Black. Instead of teaching police officers what hate crimes are and how to track them, these trainers spend time demonizing Muslims and stereotyping them as terrorists. One of these trainers, former FBI agent John Guandolo, advertises his ability to [provide](#) “a detailed understanding of street violence emerging from the alliance among the Muslim Brotherhood and violent anarchist groups including Black Lives Matter.” After listening to Muslims and Black people being stereotyped and dehumanized by trainers like Guandolo, police officers may not take hate crime reports seriously and may further victimize survivors.

About 17 percent of all city and county law enforcement agencies didn't bother to submit a single hate crime report from 2009 to 2014. ProPublica found that of agencies participating in reporting hate crime data, [88 percent](#) disclosed no hate crimes in 2016.

Authorities are sometimes confused by the patchwork of state and federal hate crime laws and don't know when to report; others mistakenly believe that an incident has to be prosecuted as a hate crime to count as one; and still others make tabulation errors, sometimes exacerbated by the use of [outdated](#) reporting methods, having not yet implemented the National Incident-Based Reporting System.

Sometimes law enforcement agencies don't report hate crimes, or they lie about them, because officials want to mask the racism and bigotry that exist in their communities.

Congress continues to look the other way and fails to provide responsible oversight. Hate crime reporting by local authorities remains voluntary, not mandatory, and that will not change unless Congress acts. There is currently no penalty for failing to report, so the actual number of hate crimes committed in the United States is many times greater than what the FBI reports.

Some survivors already choose not to report because they fear surveillance, deportation if they are undocumented, or revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity. And since many local police departments don't treat hate crimes as priorities, the belief is widespread among survivors that authorities can't be trusted.

Many survivors have responded to the spike in hate by creating neighborhood watch programs, building [hate free zones](#), and [taking self-defense classes](#). [In December 2016, for instance, the Providence Youth Student Movement](#) didn't call the police after a hate crime targeted their office. They introduced a buddy check-in system and enrolled their staff in self-defense training.

The greatest threat facing this country is homegrown white supremacists, not Muslims or refugees. A joint [FBI and Department of Homeland Security 2017 intelligence bulletin](#) warned that white supremacist groups had already carried out more attacks than any other domestic extremist group over the past 16 years and were likely to carry out more attacks over the coming year.