

**COMMENTARY** By DR. DHANPAUL NARINE

# Hate in the City

## We Should Build Bridges!

There are over 1,000 organized hate groups in the United States. Their aim is to cause mayhem and destruction by using religious and other differences to spread hate. It is reported that since 2000 hate groups rose by over 50 per cent.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, 'their rise has been fueled by growing anxiety over jobs, immigration, racial and ethnic diversity, the election of Barack Obama as America's first black president and the lingering economic crisis. Most of them merely espouse violent theories; some of them are stockpiling weapons and actively planning attacks.'

The US Congress defines a hate crime as a 'criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by the offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.'

According to the FBI most hate crimes appear to be motivated by race. In 2013 race accounted for around 49 percent of crimes that were reported. The breakdown showed that Blacks topped the list as victims with 54 per cent followed by Whites at 16 percent, Hispanics 10 percent, Asians 5 percent, American Indians 1.3 percent, and Others at 9 percent.

But the incidence of hate crimes based on religious affiliation tells another story. During 1995 to 2000 and 2001 to 2012 Jews topped the list as victims with over 50 per cent. Significant increases in the numbers are to be found in the Muslim community. For example, during 1995 to 2000 Muslims as victims were 2 percent but during 2001 to 2012 it increased to 12 percent. The 'Other' religion category remained constant at around 10 percent.

There are active hate groups all over the US; California tops the list with 57; Florida is sec-

ond with 50 and New York is third with 44. The haters do not discriminate. They attack people for flimsy reasons and in some cases for no reason at all. The killing of an Imam and his assistant in Ozone Park in Queens, New York drew condemnation from a wide cross section of the community. These, and other hate crimes,

Imam Ahmad Hamid thanked Pastor Matthew Singh for allowing the Council to use the Starlite Pavilion to host the meeting. Pastor Singh has been in the forefront in promoting peaceful causes.

Councilman Barry Grodenchik began by asking for walls to be broken as the needs of the communities are basically the same. People may not look or sound alike but they want the same things, peace and security for their families. 'People are landing at JFK Airport as we speak to start a new life in America and we have to be tolerant. Our differ-

ences are really minor,' he remarked.

Assemblyman David Weprin said our strength is in our diversity and that a hate crime against any group is a crime against all of us. He added that he has championed the Religious Garb Bill in Albany that would include facial hair for religious reasons.

Mr. Weprin referred to a New York Times article which states that some sections of the population have reservations about 9/11 being observed on the same day as Eid-ul-Adha. He said there was no need to fear anything as we have to

show our tolerance and it was important for all communities to become active politically. Senator Leroy Comrie said that there is need to combat hate speech and acts of hate. We need to continue to hold meetings to focus on hate and to come up with proposals to overcome it, he said.

One should utilize all the forums to highlight the problems. According to Mr. Comrie, 'we need to push back hate and to use education to do this as nobody wants to go backwards.'

Dr. Dhanpaul Narine quoted Martin Luther King who said that the 'time is always right to do what is right' and suggested that the school system and social media be used to combat hate. The revolution, he said, will be digitized and that there is power in knowledge.

Peter Fontanez from the New York 'Good Neighbors Coalition' spoke about the importance of working together to create a paradise of neighborhoods. He advocated programs in which peoples from the various communities

God created the Sikhs last and he gave them the task of protecting others. The next time you see a Sikh in a turban look at him as a protector of your rights.' After the tragedy of September 11, 2001 Sikhs were mistaken for Muslims and were attacked. Sikhs are brothers and sisters with everyone, Dr. Inderjeet said.

It was the turn of Shaikh Safraz Bacchus of Masjid al Abidin to make his contribution. He said that he was a student of the Citizen's Police Academy along with Imam Hamid, and they saw at first hand the challenges that police of-

mission is making grassroots outreach to teach the community about their rights. Captain James Fey from the 106th Precinct said that there is much for all of us to learn from each other and that tolerance is important. Captain Deodat Urprasad from the 102nd Precinct said that the NYPD is here to serve the public but it needs the participation of all.

Crime is down by 19 percent in the 102 Precinct and this reduction is as a result of the residents and the Precinct working together. Dr. Faizuddin Shuayb dealt with the stereotypes that affect the Muslim community. He said that there is a whole industry on Islamophobia in America that creates a negative narrative. Muslims should try to make their voices heard, especially the moderate Muslim voices and the challenge is to have a unified community and jurisprudence.



Dr. Dhanpaul Narine



Members that attended the Interfaith Council Meeting on Hate. From left, Hema Virani, NYPD Officer Khayume Khan, Dr. Dhanpaul Narine of the West Indian, Captain James Fey of the 106th Precinct, Imam Azeem Khan and Dr. Inderjit Singh.

prompted the Interfaith Council for Community Development to call a meeting in Queens in New York to discuss 'Peace, Safety and Security' in the community.

The meeting was held at the Starlite Pavilion and representatives from various organizations attended. Mr. Mohamed Hack welcomed the participants and asked for tolerance and for all mankind to get to know each other in peace. He said that in the last three months hate crimes have sent a shock wave in Queens and have taken a toll on everyone, including the law enforcement community.

The Commission on Human Rights was also represented. Frank Joseph and his colleague Ms. Rama Issa said that one of the aims of the Commission is to foster good relations between communities. An attack on one religion is an attack on all.

The Commission is a resource for all and New York City has some of the most robust human rights laws and the Com-