

## Hate crimes on rise nationally

*Activists seek more awareness statewide*

By JOSEPH SWAVY  
STATE NEWS STAFF WRITER

*This is the first installment of a two-part series examining hate crimes on the MSU campus and in the Lansing area.*

The effects of hate crime still haunt Keiran O'Malley.

O'Malley, a female-to-male transgendered student, was attacked by five to six unknown

men on Oct. 31, 1996, at the Union. The attackers fled after the incident, and no arrests have been made.

"I had a lot of nightmares and still get anxiety attacks," said O'Malley, an advertising senior. "I probably should have talked to a therapist, but I don't believe in therapy."

Hate crimes have been steadily increasing throughout Michigan and the nation in the past three years, according to FBI statistics. The MSU Department of Police and Public Safety also has reported a small increase in incidents that are classified as hate crimes.

According to national Uniform Crime Report guidelines, hate crimes are "viewed as tradition-

al crimes which are motivated by the offender's racial, religious, ethnic or sexual orientation bias." Because of the difficulty in proving bias, hate crimes only are reported if law enforcement investigators determine evidence exists to prove the offender's actions were a result, "in whole or part, by bias."

In the FBI's national 1995 report on hate crime, 9,895 offenses were reported involving 10,469 victims. Race was the most common reason for hate crimes, followed by religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity. There were more crimes against persons than there were crimes against property.

Please see HATE, page 10

Among the crimes most committed were intimidation, destruction and vandalism, simple assault and aggravated assault.

However, local residents and groups reported higher instances of hate crime where religion and sexual orientation were the motivating factors.

Among the crimes that have been classified as hate crimes in the area are the O'Malley attack and several cases of vandalism at the Hillel Jewish Student Center, 402 Linden St.

Local gay and lesbian groups also have been attempting to get the June 26, 1996, slaying of Lansing State Journal sports writer Bob Gross classified as a hate crime. Gross, who was gay, was strangled to death and then stabbed in Lansing. He was 59.

The Triangle Foundation and its president, Jeffrey Montgomery, have asked the Lansing Police Department and the Ingham County prosecutor's office to classify the incident as a hate crime. The foundation, which is a Detroit-based gay and lesbian advocacy group, contends the alleged killer, 28-year-old Robert Neil Durfee, killed Gross because he was gay.

Durfee's trial is scheduled to begin Monday in Ingham County Circuit Court.

The FBI organizes training seminars to help law enforcement officials deal with and recognize hate crimes. The seminars help officials understand the effects of hate crimes and how to "extend empathy to the victims."

"The training is continuing through civil rights units of the FBI who give lectures to local police officers," said FBI Supervisory Special Agent Steven Berry, who works at FBI headquarters in Washington. "There has been in excess of 55 Hate Crime Training Conferences so far."

Capt. Stephen Chubb of the East Lansing Police Department said the classification of hate crimes is a problem because of the definition.

"If you go by the strict definition, there are very few," Chubb said. "There has to be some type of background as to why the crime occurred. A rock thrown the window at the Hillel house with a swastika on it would classify as a hate crime, but not necessarily a regular rock."

Chubb said very few hate crimes are reported to East Lansing police.

MSU police Detective Maureen Ramsey said the campus does not see many hate crimes.

"There is not a high occurrence of hate crimes on campus, but we do put them in a separate classification and investigate them immediately," Ramsey said.

Ramsey said the majority of hate crimes reported to MSU police are graffiti and threatening or insulting letters.

organizations on campus to work to prevent hate crimes, Ramsey said.

"If there are concerns, they are addressed and hopefully in a preventive way," she said. "We go to groups on campus and participate as liaisons."

Anti-Semitic vandalism has plagued Hillel in the past. Incidents have included rocks and bottles thrown through building windows, vandalism to religious structures and a fire in the center's carport.

On Nov. 8, 1993, the eve of 55th anniversary of Kristallnacht or "Night of the Broken Glass," a rock with an inscription was thrown through one of the building's windows. The inscription led police to believe it was an anti-Semitic incident. Kristallnacht was the first instance of widespread violence against Jews in Nazi Germany. The event's name was derived from the glass that was broken in the windows of Jewish-owned stores.

Jason Miller, chairperson of MSU's Jewish Student Union, said the union's good relationship with the Anti-Defamation League, a national organization that works to fight anti-Semitism, has helped it deal with hate crimes.

Miller said the union attempts to stop the crimes before they occur.

"Instead of being reactive, we need to be pro-active," he said. "If we can hammer out differences with groups that we don't always see eye to eye with, it goes a long way."

Nadine Bowden, a Wilson Hall minority aide, said she is not aware of any major incidents of hate crimes against Black students on campus, although she said there have been some problems with destruction of MA property.

"Some MAs have had their doors vandalized, but I haven't," Bowden said. "For the most part, our job as MAs is to help students adjust."

In Michigan, perpetrators of hate crimes face a felony under the state's 1988 Ethnic Intimidation Act. The act requires that people convicted of crimes with race, religion or gender bias be sentenced to two additional years in prison. The extra two years are served concurrently with the other sentence.

"A sensitive issue the law doesn't cover is crimes according to sexual orientation," Ramsey said.

Montgomery said that in May 1996, a Bias Crime Task Force made recommendations to Gov. John Engler that the definition be changed to encompass crimes committed against gays and lesbians. So far, the change has not been made.

Monday's installment will focus on hate crimes against members of the lesbian-bi-gay and transgendered