

RESOLUTION NO. 040826-41

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

WHEREAS, in the five years from 1999 to 2003, the national Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) has documented **281** separate instances of hate crimes and/or violent acts committed against people by non-homeless individuals nationally; and

WHEREAS, of the hate crimes and/or violent acts that occurred in the 119 cities in 38 states and Puerto Rico compiled by NCH, 150 of the reported assaults were non-lethal, while 131 have resulted in the deaths of homeless people; and

WHEREAS, among the perpetrators of these crimes, the overwhelming majority were teens and/or young adults; and

WHEREAS, the reported hate crimes and/or acts of violence against homeless people in 2003 nationally resulted in 9 deaths and 61 injuries from non-lethal violence; and

WHEREAS, poor and homeless people are not a protected class under federal, state or local civil rights statutes, and none of the current hate crime laws in the United States include or acknowledge hate crimes and/or acts of violence based on economic or housing status; and

WHEREAS, no American city currently provides sufficient affordable housing stock, or enough emergency shelter beds, for all of its homeless residents; and

WHEREAS, homeless people are then forced to live on the streets or camp outdoors, leaving them extremely vulnerable to attacks and retaliation; and

WHEREAS, many such hate crimes and/or acts of violence go unpublicized and unreported, making it difficult to assess the true situation; and

WHEREAS, homeless people often will not report crimes committed against them for such reasons as mental illness, substance abuse, fear of retaliation, past experiences, or distrust of the police; and

WHEREAS, the National Coalition for the Homeless acts as the nationwide repository of hate crimes and/or acts of violence against homeless people, but there is no systematic method of collection and documenting such reports; and

WHEREAS, some cases from the five annual reports were also omitted because the victims were found beaten or murdered, but no suspects could be identified; and

WHEREAS, NCH hate crimes/violence report also not take into account the large number of sexual assaults on homeless women; and

WHEREAS, news items and reports from local homeless advocacy agencies compiled by NCH account for only an estimated 25-50% of the total number of such violent acts; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with NCH's recommendations to combat this national epidemic, the City of Austin already provides sensitivity/awareness trainings on issues pertaining to homelessness to police recruits/officers; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council officially endorses the National Coalition for the Homeless' recommendations to combat hate crimes and/or violence against people experiencing homelessness, joining nearly 500 local and national organizations, including the Austin Area Homeless Task Force, the Anti-Defamation League, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National League of Cities, national Organization of Women (NOW) and Volunteers of America and many others.

The City of Austin joins NCH in calling for a public statement from the U. S. Department of Justice acknowledging that hate crimes and/or acts of violence against homeless people is a serious national trend.

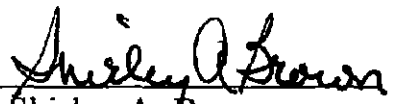
The City of Austin also requests and encourages the U. S. Department of Justice to maintain a national database to track these crimes, and, that all cities counties develop a database to track these crimes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City of Austin joins NCH's request and encouragement of Congress to direct the U. S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate the nature and scope of hate crimes and/or violent acts that occur against people experiencing homelessness nationally, and that a copy of this resolution be sent to the entire Congressional Delegation asking that they call upon the GAO for an investigation into this matter.

ADOPTED: August 26, 2004

ATTEST:


Shirley A. Brown
City Clerk