

# OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to [news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com).

## Real Hate Crimes, Harassment on the Rise

I've lived through it myself

BY GRAY NDIAYE

Jussie Smollett, a popular actor and singer-songwriter, was recently arrested and charged with filing a false police report.

Smollett alleged that he was attacked in late January by two white men who spewed racist and homophobic slurs as they assaulted him.

A standout detail was his claim that the assailants said, "This is MAGA country." Smollett has been very critical of the Trump administration and said he believed this was some sort of retaliation.

Originally viewed as the victim, Smollett is now accused of orchestrating his own attack.

This has created an uproar. Smollett's attack was a major news story, and a plethora of public figures expressed support for him. The public isn't only shocked but also outraged by the latest accusations — especially survivors



of hate crimes.

This situation hits close to home. Though I was never physically assaulted, I've been targeted for harassment due to my sexuality.

It's been a challenging journey navigating between two crucial factors of my identity; I am both black and gay. In the spring of 2015, a fake advertise-

ment looking for sex. My classmate who lived in my complex saw the ad and let me know.

It was embarrassing because other students had seen the ad. I contacted both campus security and the police. Nothing happened. I still have no closure on this incident.

In the fall of 2015, I was leaving class with a friend. A car followed

bashing, they didn't think it was a real threat (never mind my being chased by a car).

It was a Christian university. Since then, I've always wondered what they would do if I were a straight, white male who was verbally bashed and chased with evidence on tape.

Though both of these events left an impact, I'm lucky that it was no

Rights Campaign reported that in 2017, 29 transgender individuals were brutally killed. This is the highest ever recorded — though the 26 transgender individuals murdered last year comes close.

In fact, hate crimes have been on the rise for three consecutive years, according to the FBI. As a black man and a gay man — a member of two marginalized groups often targeted — this is a source of constant fear and anxiety.

Unlike Smollett's case, which was an extremely rare case of possible false reporting, rights groups estimate that far more real incidents go unreported.

Hatred is still prevalent. Whether verbal or physical, these attacks are very real and can carry fatal outcomes. The Jussie Smollett episode shouldn't distract us from this. One man may have lied, but the real story is how many lives are still threatened.

Please don't stop supporting victims of hate crimes or advocating for justice.

Gray Ndiaye is a modern-day griot (musician and storyteller) who resides in Southern California. He's on Twitter and Instagram at @graythegriot. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

*Hatred is still prevalent. Whether verbal or physical, these attacks are very real and can carry fatal outcomes. The Jussie Smollett episode shouldn't distract us from this. One man may have lied, but the real story is how many lives are still threatened.*

ment was posted on a college social app. The advertisement listed my college apartment number and was advertising for men to come over.

It was written as if it were a woman. I was gone at the time, but men began coming to my apart-

ment while its passengers yelled homophobic slurs at me, chasing me into a corner. This was caught on tape by security cameras.

I alerted campus security, and although they saw the clear visuals on the tape, nothing happened. Since it was a verbal

worse. Due to the current divisive state of our country, hate crimes have been on the rise across most categories.

In particular, there's been a spike in hate crimes regarding race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The Human

## Further Proof on what we know about Trump

**Editor's note:** NAACP President and Chief Executive Officer Derrick Johnson issued the following statement regarding Michael Cohen's testimony last week before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight



**and Reform:**

When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time. Donald Trump has been showing us his true colors for decades.

Trump's presidency and entire career has been an affront to civil rights so

nothing in Michael Cohen's testimony is surprising for a person that has historically racialized and stigmatized those around him.

From his racist housing practices, to his villainization of the Central Park 5, to his birther accusations against President Obama, to creating safe havens

for white supremacists — all of this maps out the actions and personality of a liar and a racist who is wholly uninterested in advancing the cause of civil rights.

This testimony just further proves what we already knew: we have a sitting president, who is a co-conspirator to a potential crime of a foreign nation that

meddled in our election, prompted voter suppression tactics and ultimately subverted our democratic process.

Trump has proven in his words, in his deeds and in his policies that he's not worthy of his position as the leader of the free world and Cohen's testimony only cements this.

### Letter to the Editor

## More Lanes, More Gridlock

After sitting in traffic for over an hour on my way back to Portland from my job substitute teaching in Hillsboro, I'm almost tempted to believe that the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) plan to invest \$450 million in a 1.8 mile lane highway expansion sounds like a good idea. Luckily, I spent the day teaching students about the importance of research and data and how our notions of what is "common sense" are not always rooted in reality.

*More lanes, it seems, should ease the flow of traffic. In reality, however, highway expansion has never improved traffic conditions - what we see every time, instead, is an influx of vehicles on the road, all stuck in the same mind-numbing, infuriating gridlock.*

Highway expansion, it turns out, is one of those instances. More lanes, it seems, should ease the flow of traffic. In reality, however, highway expansion has never improved traffic conditions - what we see every time, instead, is an influx of vehicles on the road, all stuck in the same mind-numbing, infuriating gridlock.

With 40 percent of Portland's carbon emissions flowing from transportation, fueling an increase that has been proven inef-

fective to remedy traffic woes in the midst of a full blow climate crisis seems like a monumentally bad idea. ODOT should be investing in ramping up public transportation and other green infrastructure - this is Portland, not L.A. Head over to [nomorefreewayspx.com](http://nomorefreewayspx.com) before April 1 to leave a public comment and tell ODOT to oppose the Rose Quarter highway expansion and invest the money where it's needed.

**Suzie Kassouf**  
Southeast Portland