Interview with UIUC police (4-19-2007)

Me: about how many cases of hate crimes do u get reported each yr.
O: not very many at all, whether they get coded wrong when they go into the system, oi
looked into, after I got the questions u were going to ask and we got 2 reported in the last
2 yrs.

Me: r the victims usually successful in bringing charges upon the hate crime offender.
O: one was a Muslim website, someone put the Danish cartoons on a website run by
Muslims. We couldn’t prosecute that one because when they reported it to us, essentially
they didn’t listen to us. I told them not to change anything, we said that they could restrict
access to your site, but don’t change anything. She took all the stuff down and they
couldn’t track it, so it wasn’t successfully prosecuted. The other one was a fight between
2 suspects, I think, if I remember this one right, there were racial slurs called out, so I’m
not sure what happened to that.
Me: Do you remember what race it was, to whom it happened.
O: maybe, American Indian and white male.
Me: when did this happen. Was it during the chief incident?
O: 2-23-07
Me: for the first one with the website, do u remember the date for that?
O: 3-4-06

Me: when a person does report a hate crime, how long does it usually take to respond to
the report?
O: it depends what crime it is, if it’s a battery, within a matter of minutes. The website
one no one was being hurt per say, physically. It goes by the line of calls, our call load
wasn’t that high, so I imagine officers were there within a matter of probably minutes, 10
minutes tops.
Me: with the case with the native American, what do you usually do with that case?
O: the individual was arrested for battery and a hate crime, so he was charged with both. I
don’t know what the state’s attorney’s office did with it, because after we get a report, we
arrest him and take him to jail, and then that report gets sent to the state’s attorney’s
office, and they charge or don’t charge, and sometimes we have that written in our book,
but for some reason this one is not.

Me: It there a lot of red tape involved with the process?
O: (very quickly) I don’t think so, um, essentially all we have to do is prove it, so it was a
hate crime because, u know, I didn’t read the report, there’s not a lot of statute.

Me: So how are the officers, when this type of case happens? Are they helpful?
O: I think the officers are very helpful with a case like this, because I mean, the
university police, police to a very diverse population. It’s a neat place to work because it
is so diverse, so I think the officers are very open to stuff, and I think they are very
helpful when it comes to this type of thing, these types of crimes.
Me: How are the hate crimes categorized?
O: like what do u mean by that?
Me: is it by race, etc?
O: I think it’s mostly by race and stuff, u have to get into that, ours is just a generic thing, hate crime.

Me: obviously there’s only 2 reported in the last two yrs, so against Muslims one?
O: I have another case here, it wasn’t reported as a hate crime, it was a spam email that was sent out, so was it a hate crime? Yea in a way, but it was just a hate email sent out to everybody and it was spam, and we all get spam in our mailbox and one of the individuals who got it was a Muslim and it had derogatory terms towards Muslims in it, the original officer who took the report didn’t categorize it as a hate crime, he categorized it as an information report, b/c it’s spam, are we gonna be able to track it? Probably not, it’s hard to track spam email, and half of it comes from outside the country anyway, so but ah we look into it.

Me: So do you know of any stories, this could kind of be one of them where it was a hate crime but it wasn’t really reported as one, it was reported as a different crime?
O: it’s the officers call as to how it gets coded when it goes into the system, and granted this is, he didn’t code it wrong, cause it’s a spam email essentially, so it’s not directed at you, it’s directed at everybody essentially, so I mean its an information report, there’s not much we could do because it wasn’t a crime, it wasn’t directed towards anybody. It wasn’t selective, it was towards a bunch of groups.

Me: After a hate crime is reported, how is the victim protected, physically?
O: Well it depends, if it is a hate crime as in this battery, we took the bad guy off the street, and we do a follow up with the victim, but a hate crime is usually an isolated incidence. Such as this battery, it’s usually a heated argument.
Me: And if the person wasn’t caught right away, how is the victim protected?
O: it depends, if the hate crime was directly toward that person, then um, we have other options, we set up surveillance on the person. Essentially we watch the victim and make sure it doesn’t happen again. We look into finding out who did it. It’s usually an isolated incident. It’s a crime of opportunity.

Me: What are the steps taken to protect the victim of the hate crimes?
O: we do the same thing, we talk about personal safety, we can’t be there all the time with everybody, we just don’t have the man power, we educate on personal safety steps they can take. This goes back to your freshman orientation when you first get here, we talk to people about walking in groups, and not putting themselves out there. But I think relatively speaking, we have a very safe campus.

Me: If someone is charged with a hate crime, how is it punishable?
O: (takes a long time to look it up) I can’t find it in here. Maybe I’ll find something in a second. As you can see we charge it a lot (sarcastic). (Takes a lot more time to look it up). It depends on the seriousness. If they have a history, it’s more severe. This one I can’t tell you. It’s not in the website for some reason.
Me: Do you know what happened after the man was arrested after the Native American incident?
O: It’s not in there, so my guess is that it got sent to adult diversion, so it may mean he was a first time offender, as in all cases, if they are a first time offender, they are going to look into it. If he was drunk and stupid, and it was his first time, most of the time they are going to send it to adult diversion, which it is your one and only chance. They could send them to counseling or we could send people. It’s your one and only chance to not have it on your record. So my guess is it was sent to adult diversion. It didn’t enter our computer.

Me: Now you said that there was only two hate crimes reported in the past two years, but I would think that there’s a lot more that actually happens on campus, how can it be more encouraged to help someone bring out a charge against someone? Encourage people to come in and report the crime, most people would probably say oh I’m going to take it to the police and then they might not be able to do anything, they may not really know what the system is?
O: If it’s a student, we have other avenues, we could send them to student discipline. Do you remember the facebook incident when the person said he wanted to throw a tomahawk, it was taken to student discipline. The attorneys office did not want to prosecute, and that was their choice, so we go through student discipline and he could be sanctioned, and student discipline can do a lot to somebody. That’s one of the options we have, and we could tell student discipline what we think, if we could council the person and change his ways, then that would be better, he would go out into society and be more productive. They can force him into counseling, they can watch him for 4 yrs and they could kick him out if he does something again. And this would be stamped on his transcript. This will follow you around anywhere you go. If people don’t want to report the hate crime to the police, they can go to conflict resolution, and they can deal with it, some people are conscientious and they don’t want to get into the law, so that is where they can go.
Me: It seems like the best way to do it (conflict resolution) but I wouldn’t think most people want to go to conflict resolution, if someone really hates someone else, they don’t really want to see them again, is there another way to educate them?
O: The student’s dean office does a really good job. The person could just report it in email and the student’s dean’s office would call them.

Me: Do you have any personal experiences with hate crimes, especially those with Muslims?
O: Well, I’ve worked on a couple of different reports dealing with Muslims. One was with the website thing, but I am also working with the same individual with the spam email, and we are going to try to see what we can do with it. An interesting thing, before I came here, I worked at Illinois Department of Corrections. A lot of inmates convert during Ramadan, and may inmates convert to Islam because they get treated better, with food, I’ve talked to a lot of Muslims about different aspects. The Muslim and the Christian fate are similar until the new testament. I actually have a Qur’an. Seventh day Adventist, kind of similar.