

## OP-ED

### **The Exeter Police Department will not tolerate Hate in their community**

Recently, the Exeter Police have been made aware of some disturbing reports in which people have alleged to have been treated in a completely unacceptable manner. The reports stem from interactions that some students of Phillips Exeter Academy have alleged to have occurred during their travels in Exeter. Students of varying races and religions have come forth and talked of people reportedly driving by them and shouting racial epithets, insults, taunts, swears, or even so far as to throw cigarettes near them.

NO ONE should have to endure this type of treatment which appears to have been directed at degrading one's civil rights-especially our high school aged children. Are we finding or suggesting that there is a systematic problem or a culture of hate within our community of Exeter-**absolutely not**. However, we can all agree that just one of these reports is too many. These interactions can be far reaching and also affects the victim's families and friends, as well as the entire Exeter community.

Nationally, it is widely estimated that hate crimes are in fact under reported. Reporting hate crimes can lead to their prevention by identifying those prone to these activities and sending a message that these crimes will not be ignored. The Exeter Police Department urges people to report incidents as victims (or as witnesses) and to be assured that we will take every report of this nature very seriously and investigate it to the fullest.

Depending on the actions, offenders could be faced with several serious charges. In addition, the Exeter Police Department is prepared to work in co-ordination with the NH Attorney General's Office and seek an enhanced hate crime penalty to be attached to any chargeable Misdemeanors or Felonies as applicable. A hate crime may be defined as crimes (often violent) which are substantially motivated because of hostility towards a person or group's race, ethnicity, religion, national origin or immigration status, gender, and/or sexual orientation.

There are several ways which as a community we can help stop hate and promote safety and inclusion. One such local resource in Exeter is the Racial Unity Team whose mission is to advance relationships among people of different racial identities, increase understanding and reduce bias in our community. Another national resource can be found at the Not in Our Town (NIOT) Movement <https://www.niot.org/about-us>

**Exeter Chief of Police, Stephan R. Poulin**