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White House to spotlight hate crimes

SOCIAL ISSUES: Clinton will lead a conference this week in order to raise public awareness of this problem.

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Cox News Service

WASHINGTON — Thien Minh Ly was in-line skating on a tennis court in Tustin when he was suddenly attacked by two young white supremacists. Ly, a 24-year-old Vietnamese-American and recent graduate of UCLA and Georgetown University, was stomped on, then stabbed about 40 times.

The brutality and racial overtones of Ly's murder in January 1996 drew national media attention. But more than 10,000 other hate crimes occurred in the United States that same year with almost no public notice.

That is part of the problem with hate crimes in America today, experts say. For the most part, they go unnoticed, sometimes even by law-enforcement agencies.

Consequently, President Clinton will lead a conference at the White House this week in order to raise public awareness of the problem.

Some participants, such as Mi-

chael Lieberman, associate director of the Anti-Defamation League, will try to promote stiffer punishments for crimes motivated by hate.

There is significant agreement among experts that stiffer penalties could help curb such crimes.

"The unique harm caused by bias crimes not only justifies their enhanced punishment, it compels it," said Frederick Lawrence, a Boston University law professor whose book, "Punishing Hate," is scheduled for publication by Harvard University Press next year.

Lieberman wants to use the White House conference to impress upon local police that the intimidation and psychological damage to victims of hate crimes often lingers longer than that of other crime victims.

"It is a more personal crime if it is motivated by hate," Lieberman said. "And it's important for police to take it seriously, because failure to respond could lead a community to think they have to take the law into their own hands."

Not all hate crimes are as brutal as Ly's murder. In that case, an Orange County Superior Court jury convicted Ginner Lindberg of murder Sept. 30 and found that he had killed Ly out of racial hatred. Testimony showed that he had bragged



KENNEDY Says Hate Crime Network is a 'national model of collaboration between police and residents.'

O.C. leader to join in look at hate crimes

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Rusty Kennedy, executive director of Orange County's Human Relations Council, will be among the participants at a hate-crimes conference Monday at the White House.

Kennedy will discuss the county's Hate Crime Network, a group he hails as a "national model of collaboration between police and residents."

Members of the council and other community leaders will gather Monday at Santa Ana College to view a satellite feed of the Washington conference.

about the killing, using a racial epithet. On Oct. 9, the same jurors recommended that Lindberg die by lethal injection. Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 12.

The most frequently reported incidents usually fall under the vague category of "intimidation." Vandalism is next.

Experts say there is a uniquely harmful nature in crimes motivated solely by racial, ethnic, religious or sexual-orientation bias.

"Hate crimes are the embodiment of intolerance — acts intended to create tension and fear," said Attorney General Janet Reno, who will lead a conference discussion on coordinating federal and state police efforts. "Hate crimes tear us apart when we should be moving closer together."

The White House conference begins Monday amid efforts by