



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Senator Gianaris, Civil Rights Groups Address Uptick in Hate Crimes At Site of Recent Incident

MICHAEL GIANARIS November 21, 2016

| ISSUE: **HATE CRIMES, HATE SPEECH, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, HATE RELATED CRIMES**



(Astoria, NY) – Following a hateful spree of attacks and rhetoric, Senator Gianaris, joined by civil rights groups including NYCLU, Make the Road Action New York, Muslim-American Society of Queens, New York Immigration Coalition and the NYU Islamic Center addressed a recent hate attack in western Queens as well as the overall hostile climate in the aftermath of the recent election.

On November 17th, a Muslim driver recorded hateful remarks directed toward his religion by another driver. This followed an incident on November 11th at the 30th Avenue subway platform where two swastikas were drawn on the wall.

There were a reported 328 hate crimes in New York City through November 13th. This is a 31 percent increase from the previous year. There was both an increase in anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic hate crimes.

Senator Michael Gianaris said, “It is disturbing to see these hateful acts occur in a community like ours that prides itself on its diversity. The bigotry and racism unleashed since Election Day is not representative of our community and is not welcome here. Families and children are living in fear and I plan on doing everything I can to stop these vile attacks, provide support and reassure our neighbors that they are safe.”

Senator Gianaris also shared the following remarks on behalf of Chris Cody, the passenger who rode with the driver after the incident occurred. “On the morning of November 17th, I made small talk with my Uber driver in his native Arabic, as I am studying towards fluency in the language. He told me about his family, and how he had moved to the U.S. about 6-7 years ago. From there, he expressed his surprise that I was so open to speaking with him, as he was coming off of a radically different incident in Queens just prior to picking me up. Then, he sent me the video. I debated about what to do next, not knowing the exact course of events. But to stay silent would have validated this behavior – indefensible regardless of what occurred prior between two disgruntled New Yorkers on the road. My intention was not to belabor the hate and divisiveness that the recent presidential campaign brought on and that most people I know hope to put behind us. In short, I felt ashamed as a New Yorker and as an American that he had to experience such hate and felt I

owed it to him and others to share. This is a teachable moment and I hope it serves as a wake-up call that an injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

NYCLU Executive Director, Donna Lieberman said, "New York must be a safe haven that respects the dignity of all people. The state must respond to the rise in hate crimes with the strongest civil rights protections that exist. We cannot tolerate any delay in filling the gaps in our laws that have remained for too long."

Theo Oshiro, Deputy Director, Make the Road New York said, "Our community stands up today to say that we will not tolerate these attacks. President-elect Trump has fanned the flames of hate and intolerance across this country, and he must take action to stop this wave of violence. A critical first step is withdrawing the appointments of Steve Bannon and Jeff Sessions—two infamous racist and anti-immigrant figures—from his new administration. Their consideration for high-level appointments in the White House indicates Trump's continued acceptance of white supremacy and extremism, and he must reverse course."

Steven Choi, Executive Director of New York Immigration Coalition said, "The New York Immigration Coalition condemns these increased hate crimes that have erupted after a year long campaign by the President-elect that vilified and targeted immigrant communities. We call on all New Yorkers to stand by their neighbors who may be targeted with violence or hate speech because of their religion, nationality or skin color - now is the time to unite against hate and show that New Yorkers stand by immigrants and all that they bring to our communities. It is also essential that New York's law enforcement take these acts of hate

seriously and act swiftly to protect vulnerable communities from danger. We stand today with Senator Gianaris, Governor Cuomo, Mayor de Blasio and all our leaders that have echoed this same call to action to stand up discrimination and protect our most vulnerable communities."

NYU Islamic Center Associate Muslim Chaplain Sheikh Faiyaz Jaffer said, "Our communities need to work together to combat hate and prejudice across religious and ethnic lines, and leaders need to work together to stand up for core values."