



COUNCIL of RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

June 29, 2000

STATEMENT ON HATE CRIME ANNIVERSARY

The approaching July Fourth holiday weekend gives us all the opportunity to celebrate again our nation's freedom and its best traditions.

One year ago, this time of celebration was overshadowed by a series of crimes perpetrated out of racial and religious hatred, and rationalized by a few adherents of a false and distorted understanding of religious faith and commitment. In the Chicago area, the communities of Rogers Park and Skokie were particular victims of these crimes.

The members of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, composed of leaders of the Chicago area's Roman Catholic, Jewish, Anglican, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Islamic and Protestant communions and institutions, mark this occasion as one which calls for a clear reaffirmation of the true religious values and commitments which bind us in peace to one another under God.

We are religious leaders of many traditions, but we hold in common the God ordained unity of the human family. The prejudice and violence which we denounce again today is a deeply religious issue. We hold to be false any teaching which would single out any individual or group and justify or perpetrate an act of hatred or violence against them.

We affirm that the God who created each one of us created us in an act of love. Therefore, no human being should ever be an object of hatred or malevolence. We condemn, therefore, that most hateful of sins: that others -- created by God, as we all have been -- should become objects of hate-filled violence.

As light drives out the darkness, we say to those who might still be lurking in the shadows of prejudice or hatred: give up that sinful way, we are children of God together or we are nothing. As we celebrate this holiday of freedom, we are to remember that hatred of any group places the freedom of all in jeopardy.

We commend those individuals and groups who have rallied and renewed their efforts this past year to reaffirm racial and religious tolerance as the norm of their communities. The acts of violence which we deplore were inflicted in an effort to fracture and destroy our life together. They have, instead, united and compelled us to reaffirm our oneness in community, and our unity as children of one creating and loving God.