

# BREAKING NEWS



**August 5, 2010**

**At this moment, the Anti-Violence Project is delivering the following statement at the Supreme Court in Brooklyn denouncing the act of hate violence that led to the death of Jose Sucuzhañay and bringing attention to the way that hate violence affects us all**

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The New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) serves lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and HIV-affected survivors of hate violence, domestic violence and sexual violence. AVP was founded in 1980 in reaction to neighborhood incidents of anti-LGBT violence and the failure of the criminal legal system to respond. Thirty years later, we are grateful for the opportunity to add our voice and perspective to this sentencing hearing and thank the Court for allowing us to do so. We join the Sucuzhañay's friends and family members and the community members who were affected by this tragic murder to explain why hate crimes designations are critical to the Criminal Court's response to bias-motivated violence.

When a hate crime occurs, it has a tragic and irreversible impact on the friends and family members of the victim. It also sends a message to the community as whole that anyone who is perceived to be "different" is at risk of violence, simply for being who they are. In this case, Jose Sucuzhañay was attacked for being Ecuadorian and because the perpetrator perceived him to be gay. The use of anti-gay epithets, as well as anti-Ecuadorian epithets, is significant because these epithets reveal a violent bias against groups of people. Laws that prohibit bias-crime designation are created to protect communities, such as immigrants, communities of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, who are most vulnerable to hate-motivated violence. Bias-crime prohibitions send a message to not only LGBT communities, but our entire city, that this type of violence is not acceptable to a fair and civil society.

Enforcing hate crimes laws is vital to setting a standard, in this city and this country, that demonstrates that we will not tolerate discrimination and bias-related violence. We at AVP know that people are targeted for this type of brutality every day based on who they are perceived to be – often being targeted and "jumped" for no reason except bias, as in this attack. The recent increase in hate crimes on Staten Island and elsewhere in New York demonstrates that this violence is not abating.

This violence has lasting effects on the communities that bias-crime perpetrators target. We now know that, despite the broad legal protections against racist and homophobic and transphobic violence in New York City and State, this violence still happens. We cannot bring Jose Sucuzhañay back, and we grieve with his family, friends and community at this loss. However the Court today has the opportunity to positively impact the culture of this city – and this country – by recognizing not only the tragedy that resulted in Mr. Sucuzhañay's murder, but also by condemning the hatred and violence that motivated it. To do so creates an expectation in our society that we will respect all of its members. In a city as diverse as New York City, we must denounce violence based on bias against identity because if we do not, we are all vulnerable to this violence.