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Published November 24, 2007

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## To the point: Hate too common here

Our opinions

New statistics show hate crimes on the rise nationally; Michigan saw the third highest number in the nation. Only New Jersey and California had more, according to FBI data released this week.

Hate crimes are those motivated by race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic or national origin or disability. The data represent cases investigated by law enforcement agencies across the state.

Being a country built of immigrants who came from somewhere else, the United States likes to think of itself as a welcoming place with tolerance for diverse religions, races and beliefs. And for the most part, that may be true. But there are still people who would take criminal action based on their bias against another person's background.

This is a country founded on free speech and the right to opinions, but a line is properly drawn between having an opinion and acting on that opinion in a criminal way.

Sadly, hate crimes are not where Michigan wants to be known as a national leader.

### Look into adoption

This week Michigan observed its fifth Michigan Adoption Day, when courts in more than 30 counties across the state finalized more than 200 adoptions.

Michigan's event is the largest such observance in the country, according to national Adoption Day organizers. That's an accomplishment that can make the state feel proud.

The day is designed to encourage potential adoptive and foster parents. It is co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court, the Department of Human Services, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange and the Family Services Division of the State Court Administrative Office.

Some counties held parties for adoptive families or open houses with speakers to educate people about the adoption process. In 2007, about 2,500 children were adopted from placements in the foster care system.

While reuniting children with biological parents is the first goal, courts do terminate parental rights for abuse or neglect. Michigan has about 4,300 children whose birth parents' rights have been terminated and for whom adoption is a goal. Many are older, have special needs or are minorities.

To find out more about adoption, contact MARE at [www.mare.org](http://www.mare.org) or 800-589-6273.

**Keep registry up to date**

Michigan State Police rounded up 397 sex offenders this fall, and took out warrants for an additional 658. All had violated the state's registry laws by not keeping police agencies informed of where they are living.

Some 29 offenders in the Lansing area were among those arrested.

The registry is only as good as the enforcement of the law that requires it. Since such sweeps began in 2005, police across the state have arrested some 2,500 sex offenders for failure to comply.

One might wish such registries were not necessary, but since they are, it's important that they be current and accurate. Police agencies are commended for their efforts to enforce the registry law.

**Leader steps down in E. Lansing**

Sam Singh finished his 12 years of service as an East Lansing City Council member quietly last week. But Singh, who spent his last two years as mayor, should be remembered for his steady contributions to the city.

Elected in 1995, Singh quickly earned respect of his colleagues and became mayor pro tem after just two years on the council. He held that leadership spot for eight years before becoming mayor in 2005.

During his 12 years on the council, East Lansing has worked to collaborate with Michigan State University and to keep student concerns in mind while addressing city issues.

Public service can be a thankless task, but the residents of East Lansing should certainly be thankful for Singh's dedication and leadership.

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