

August 1, 2017

OP ED/GUEST OPINION

As the longest established and active human rights task force in the region founded in February 1981, the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations wishes to recognize and congratulate the Gonzaga University Institute for Hate Studies and Gonzaga University on their upcoming historical 20th anniversary as an Institute recognized nationally and internationally for its effective programs and curricula advancing human and civil rights through an analysis of what causes people to hate and working to discover antidotes to hate.

After serious incidents of malicious harassment and threats directed at African American Gonzaga University Law School students in the mid-1990's, approximately 50 Gonzaga faculty and staff met on March 21, 1997 to plan a response followed by a smaller group of national experts on bigotry and hate during a conference at Gonzaga on May 21, 1997.

These commendable actions led to the creation of the Gonzaga University Institute for Action Against Hate (now the GU Institute for Hate Studies) with its first public event in Hughes Auditorium on October 20, 1998 co-sponsored by the Spokane YWCA with GU Professor George Critchlow as master of ceremonies. The evening featured addresses by the late Eva Lassman, a holocaust survivor and Tony Stewart, a co-founder of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.

Leading up to the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies 20th anniversary celebration in 2018 the Institute will hold its 4th International Conference on Hate Studies October 19-21, 2017 titled "Engaging with Communities for Justice". The conference will feature prominent keynote addresses, scholars from across the United States and other countries presenting academic papers plus other activities. The Spokane County Human Rights Task Force and the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations are co-sponsors.

We not only want to congratulate the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies on its success in helping us better understand hate and discovering effective methods to combat hate for almost 20-years but our pledge to continue our long-standing partnership with this remarkable Institute and its work in the future.

The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations

Christie Wood, president

Tony Stewart, secretary