

# Anne Arundel County Standing Together Against Hate Conference

February 20 – 21, 2026  
Anne Arundel Community College

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## Day 1: February 20, 2026

**8:30 – 9:00: Conference Sign-In, Breakfast, Networking**

**9:00 – 9:25: Welcome, Opening Remarks**

**9:25 – 9:30: Conference Roadmap, House Keeping**

**9:30 – 9:55: A Mother's Fight: Turning Tragedy into a Movement Against Hate**

**Description:** What happens when a mother's worst nightmare becomes a national call to action? Following the tragic, hate-fueled murder of her son, Lt. Richard Collins III, Dawn Collins transformed her unimaginable grief into an unyielding mission for justice. In this powerful and deeply moving keynote, she shares her family's story of resilience, their fight to strengthen hate-crime legislation, and their journey to establish the 2nd Lt. Richard W. Collins III Foundation. Join her to understand how one family's courage can inspire a community to combat intolerance, foster social justice, and honor a legacy of patriotism and service.

**10:00 – 10:50: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Victims of Hate Crimes**

**Description:** Responding to hate crimes requires more than just following protocol—it demands an understanding of the deep, specific trauma inflicted upon a victim and their community. This session brings together a unique panel of hate crime survivors and experienced service providers to bridge the gap between policy and human experience. The first half of the discussion, led by survivors, will illuminate the profound and often overlooked psychological impact of hate-fueled violence. In the second half, service providers will share best practices for creating a trauma-informed response system that is empathetic, effective, and centered on the survivor's needs. Attendees will gain actionable insights into creating a response that prioritizes healing, avoids re-traumatization, and fosters trust with marginalized communities.

**10:50 – 11:00: Break**

**11:00 – 12:00: Faith Leaders as Bridge Builders: Countering Hate with Dialogue and Healing**

**Description:** As spiritual caregivers and community leaders, faith leaders are uniquely positioned to serve as catalysts for peace and understanding in a world often torn by division and hate. This session offers a compassionate and practical approach to addressing these challenges by moving beyond theory and focusing on tangible action. Through facilitated dialogue and shared experiences, a diverse panel of faith leaders will discuss how they empower and equip their communities with the skills of healing, empathy, and strategic engagement. They will share real-world examples of how interfaith collaboration can de-escalate tensions, challenge hateful narratives, and guide communities toward reconciliation after a hate-fueled incident.

**12:00 – 12:10: Video Presentation: Uncover Hate: Building Trust and Supporting Victims with the Anne Arundel County Police Department**

**Description:** Building trust between law enforcement and Anne Arundel County's diverse communities is vital in the fight against hate. In her role as the Community Programs Coordinator for the Anne Arundel County Police Department, Camyla Smith serves as a critical bridge between residents and police by providing a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space for reporting hate or bias incidents. As an immigrant herself, Ms. Smith acts as a trusted advocate, guiding victims through the entire reporting and

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legal process while ensuring they receive regular, proactive case updates. Beyond direct victim support, she facilitates essential translation services and access to counseling, while simultaneously assisting law enforcement officers in navigating cultural or language barriers that may arise during investigations.

## **12:10 – 1:10: Lunch & Networking**

## **1:10 – 1:40: From Bias Incident to Conviction: A Case Presentation**

**Description:** Prosecuting hate crimes and bias-motivated cases requires a rigorous, start-to-finish strategy. This session provides a practical roadmap for legal professionals and investigators, offering key strategies to bridge the gap between initial incident response and a strong, successful prosecution. The session covers essential techniques for identifying and documenting evidence and bias indicators at the scene. Best practices are highlighted for comprehensive case building, navigating complex evidentiary challenges, and effective courtroom techniques. Attendees will gain the practical skills needed to present a compelling case to a jury, ensuring accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims and their communities.

## **1:45 – 2:00: Overview: The Anne Arundel County Hate Crimes Reporting Portal**

**Description:** The Anne Arundel County Hate Bias Incident/Crime Reporting Portal is a tool for community members to report hate bias incidents and hate crimes, distinct from a police reporting system. It serves as a data collection mechanism to track incidents, identify trends, and inform the work of the county's Hate Crimes Prevention Program under the Office of Equity and Human Rights. Information provided helps the program team develop targeted programming and outreach.

## **2:00 – 2:45: Rich With Love: Documentary Film Screening and Fireside Chat**

**Description:** This featured session of the Standing Together Against Hate Conference centers on the documentary "Rich With Love," honoring the life and legacy of 1st Lt. Richard W. Collins III, a Bowie State University student and Army officer murdered in a 2017 hate-fueled attack. The program highlights the transformative advocacy of the 2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation, which successfully championed the 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins III Law to strengthen Maryland's hate crime statutes. This tragedy also spurred the formation of the BSU-UMD Social Justice Alliance, a historic partnership between Bowie State University and the University of Maryland dedicated to confronting intolerance through institutional collaboration. The experience concludes with a Fireside Chat focused on the human impact of bias and the collective responsibility of Anne Arundel County residents to move from reflection to action.

## **3:00 – 3:15: Closing Remarks & Call to Action**

- Mary Dadone, PhD. (Commissioner, AACO Human Relations Commission, Secretary/Chair, AACO Education Commission of NAACP, President of the Board of Directors for the Center of Help/Centro de Ayuda)

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## **Day 2: February 21, 2026**

**8:30 – 9:00: Conference Sign-In, Breakfast, Networking**

**9:00 – 9:10: Greetings**

**9:10 – 9:20: Welcome, Day 1 Recap, Housekeeping**

**9:20 – 9:45: No Home for Hate: Systemic Equity and the Path to a Safer Maryland**

**Description:** As Maryland navigates a complex landscape of rising bias and evolving social dynamics, this keynote examines the critical intersection of legislative advocacy and systemic equity in the fight against hate. In 2026, Maryland remains at a pivotal juncture, driven by the vital work of the Maryland Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention to dismantle prejudice through structural change. This session provides a comprehensive analysis of current hate crime trends, including the disproportionate impact of bias on marginalized communities and the emergence of technology-facilitated harassment. By exploring the state's 2026 legislative priorities and the impetus behind the Commission's expanded mandate, the keynote highlights how interagency collaboration is closing legal loopholes and securing historic funding for the Protecting Against Hate Crimes (PAHC) Grant Program. Attendees will gain a deep understanding of the state's data-driven initiatives and the ongoing mission to integrate equity into the very fabric of Maryland's legal and social response to hate.

**9:45 – 10:25: Human Stories of Healing and Resilience**

**Description:** Survivors and family members of hate-fueled violence are not just witnesses to tragedy—they are powerful agents of change. This panel brings together those who have transformed their pain into purpose. They will share their personal journeys of prevention, education, and community healing, providing a candid and compelling look at how lived experience is a vital force in combating hatred. Attendees will learn specific strategies for turning empathy into effective action.

**10:25 – 10:45: The Emmett Till Alert System: A Community-Based Model for Combating Hate Crimes**

**Description:** The Emmett Till Alert System is a privately funded, Maryland-based initiative. Named in honor of the 14-year-old who was brutally murdered in Mississippi in 1955, the system is designed as an early warning network, to rapidly notify Black elected officials and civil rights leaders about credible racist incidents and hate crimes in the state. Modeled after the Amber Alert system, its primary purpose is to increase awareness, enable rapid community response, and ensure that every reported hate crime receives attention.

**10:45 – 11:00 (15 mins): Overview: The Anne Arundel County Hate Crimes Reporting Portal**

**Description:** The Anne Arundel County Hate Bias Incident/Crime Reporting Portal is a tool for community members to report hate bias incidents and hate crimes, distinct from a police reporting system. It serves as a data collection mechanism to track incidents, identify trends, and inform the work of the county's Hate Crimes Prevention Program under the Office of Equity and Human Rights. Information provided helps the program team develop targeted programming and outreach.

**11:00 – 11:15: Break**

**11:15 – 12:00: Hate Speech vs. Free Speech: Navigating First Amendment Protections on College Campuses**

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**Description:** Campus leaders today face a delicate and increasingly volatile challenge: balancing the commitment to an inclusive community with the stringent demands of the First Amendment. When controversial events spark tension, the need for a clear, legally sound response is immediate. This session moves beyond abstract theory to provide a practical roadmap for managing these complex situations. We will explore the critical distinctions between protected, albeit offensive, speech and legally restrictable actions like incitement or true threats. Join us to develop actionable strategies for fostering robust dialogue while staying within constitutional boundaries and protecting your institution from legal challenges.

**12:00 – 12:15: Video Presentation: A Quiet Remembrance: Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr.**

**Description:** This brief video presentation features archival news clips and documentary footage detailing the murders of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. in 1998. By revisiting these tragic events, the screening honors their memories and acknowledges the global movement for justice sparked by their deaths. These narratives illustrate the devastating reality of hate-motivated violence and highlight how their legacies led to the landmark Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. This screening provides a dedicated space for attendees to reflect on their lives and their profound impact on the fight for human rights in America.

**12:15 – 1:15: Lunch & Networking**

**1:15 – 2:00: Building Community Resilience: Leveraging Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) to Prevent Hate Crimes and Targeted Violence**

**Description:** Acts of targeted violence, including hate crimes and domestic terrorism, are rarely spontaneous; they are typically the culmination of an observable pathway of thinking and behavior. This session explores how Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) serves as a proactive, community-wide framework to identify and disrupt these pathways before they escalate. Participants will examine the transition from recognizing early warning signs to implementing a systematic threat management process that prioritizes public safety while strictly upholding civil liberties. The session highlights the essential collaboration between law enforcement, mental health professionals, and civic leaders to create a holistic safety network across workplaces, houses of worship, and local organizations. Attendees will learn how multidisciplinary teams evaluate complex risk factors to deploy tailored interventions and support services, moving beyond traditional security measures to foster a safer, more resilient community.

**2:00 – 3:00: Breaking the Silence: Addressing Barriers to Reporting Hate Incidents**

**Description:** Hate crimes are significantly underreported, with a majority of victims choosing not to contact law enforcement. This session provides a comprehensive examination of the complex personal and systemic hurdles that contribute to this "dark figure" of hate crime data. We will explore a range of barriers, including fear of retaliation and re-victimization, historical distrust of authorities among marginalized communities, the normalization of abuse by victims who feel discrimination is unavoidable, and simple confusion about what a hate crime is and how to report it. Participants will gain insight into the profound impact of this underreporting and explore best practices for building trust, improving data collection, and empowering victims to report hate incidents in a safe and supportive environment. Join us to discuss how to foster a culture where victims feel believed, supported, and confident that action will be taken.

**3:00 – 3:15 (15 mins) – Closing Remarks & Call to Action**