



Tough on Hate?: The Cultural Politics of Hate Crimes (Critical Issues in Crime and Society)

Clara S. Lewis

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Why do we know every gory crime scene detail about such victims as Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. and yet almost nothing about the vast majority of other hate crime victims? Now that federal anti-hate-crimes laws have been passed, why has the number of these crimes not declined significantly? To answer such questions, Clara S. Lewis challenges us to reconsider our understanding of hate crimes. In doing so, she raises startling issues about the trajectory of civil and minority rights.

Tough on Hate is the first book to examine the cultural politics of hate crimes both within and beyond the law. Drawing on a wide range of sources—including personal interviews, unarchived documents, television news broadcasts, legislative debates, and presidential speeches—the book calls attention to a disturbing irony: the sympathetic attention paid to certain shocking hate crime murders further legitimizes an already pervasive unwillingness to act on the urgent civil rights issues of our time. Worse still, it reveals the widespread acceptance of ideas about difference, tolerance, and crime that work against future progress on behalf of historically marginalized communities.

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