

NBC10.com

Gay Couple Says They've Been Targeted By Hate

NBC 10 Investigators Get Answers For Couple

POSTED: 9:28 pm EST November 8, 2007
UPDATED: 7:31 am EST November 9, 2007

PHILADELPHIA -- A couple in Philadelphia said they have endured years of name-calling, assaults and property damage all because they are gay.

Video | Images

When the latest threat happened they went to the police for help.

Now, they've told their story to Lu Ann Cahn and the NBC 10 Investigators.

"They left this on our doorstep," Javel Saudades said.

To Saudades and Daniel Hallacy the message is clear -- the phallic-shaped steel rod is a symbol of hate.

"We'll stick it up to you. You better leave or we're going to stick it to you," Saudades said of the message he believes the object was intended to send.

"... They put 'gay faggot (expletive)' on the window," Saudades said.

The couple said they have been harassed since they moved to the Kensington neighborhood on Howard Street six years ago. They claim their tires have been slashed so many times they don't bother replacing them anymore.

They say neighbors once physically attacked them, and the word "faggot" was spray painted on their door.

And now this has happened.

"I'm embarrassed, I am stressed, depressed and afraid," Saudades said.

"It's not that he's gay. We just don't like the things that he wants to do," said neighbor William Parks.

Parks admitted he doesn't like the bathtub the couple has put in the courtyard between their homes and there have been neighborhood scuffles.

"But I mean why, if it doesn't have anything to do with them being gay, why does someone spray-paint faggot? Why is there an assault? Why is there a penis on their steps?" Cahn asked.

"That would be just like if, say I was getting, got mad at somebody and I holler, 'Here (expletive).' You understand what I'm trying to say? And call me, 'Hey you (expletive),' or something like that. That would be the same thing," Parks said.

"Well, someone just put a steel penis on their doorstep," Cahn asked two women.

"What's that about?" one of the women asked sarcastically.

"That could have been them that put it," she added.

More



- **Images:** Gay Couple Says They've Been Targeted By Hate

"You think they put it there?" Cahn asked, getting the response, "Probably."

"Why would they do that?" Cahn pressed.

"Because they're sick, probably," the women answered.

Saudades and Hallacy said they have called police dozens of times.

"I didn't know that I was going to be a pioneer, you know, on a frontier of homophobia in this neighborhood in 2007 in Philadelphia. I think it's absurd," Hallacy said.

In the past, the couple believes police haven't taken their complaints seriously enough.

"They're very blasé about it," Saudades said.

Philadelphia police Lt. Frank Vanore said, "We'd like to make an arrest. If we find out who committed those crimes, believe me, they'll pay for what they've done. The problems with the particular neighbors is there's no evidence these neighbors perpetrated any of these crimes."

The Philadelphia Gay Newspaper has documented the ongoing incidents for three years. One activist said neighbors should not tolerate what has been happening.

"You need to immediately say that this is unacceptable in this neighborhood and in this city. I think that's a very important message that has to be communicated," said Malcolm Lazin, of Equality Forum.

"All we'd like is to live peacefully and to have a decent clean neighborhood," Hallacy said.

Neighbors NBC 10 talked to said they don't care that the couple is gay and they've done nothing wrong.

Meanwhile, the FBI and Pennsylvania's Human Relations Commission, along with the Philadelphia police, have all investigated the latest incident.

Police said they have had neighborhood meetings to try to mediate problems.

Still, the couple said they believe neighbors are responsible, Cahn said. They feel they are finally being heard.

Copyright 2007 by NBC10.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.