

= Hands Across Hawthorne =

Hands Across Hawthorne was a rally held at the Hawthorne Bridge in Portland , Oregon , on May 29 , 2011 , in response to an attack on a gay couple one week prior for holding hands while walking across the bridge . According to the couple and the Portland Police Bureau , a group of five men followed Brad Forkner and Christopher Rosevear along the bridge before they were attacked . The assault was condemned by Portland 's openly gay mayor , Sam Adams , and its police chief , Mike Reese , and news of the attack spread throughout the Pacific Northwest and the United States . The attack prompted volunteers from the Q Center , a nonprofit organization that supports the LGBT community , to form street patrols as a means of monitoring Portland 's downtown area .

Several LGBT and human rights organizations sponsored Hands Across Hawthorne in response to the attack . With the purpose of linking hands across the entire span of the Hawthorne Bridge , more than 4 @, @ 000 people attended the rally , even though it was only publicized by a single Facebook page just 72 hours prior . Forkner , Rosevear , Mayor Adams , and other community leaders spoke at the rally . The event received attention throughout the United States , and Instinct magazine acknowledged Portland 's ability to gather a crowd of 4 @, @ 000 in support of the LGBT community despite rainy weather . On June 5 , residents of Spokane , Washington , held a similar hand @-@ holding rally called " Hands Across Monroe " , crossing the Monroe Street Bridge in Riverfront Park .

= = Background = =

= = = Hate crimes in Portland = = =

Police bureau statistics show a decrease in the number of " bias crime assaults " from 26 in 2007 to 15 in 2009 . In 2010 , however , 20 ( of more than 50 ) hate crimes relating to gender or sexual orientation occurred in Portland , far outweighing racial hate crimes . In May , a group of men in drag were harassed and assaulted by a group of five men . The filing of a police report resulted in a community forum at Portland 's Q Center ( a nonprofit organization supporting the LGBT community ) , which was attended by more than 100 city residents , Portland Police Chief Mike Reese , Mayor Sam Adams , and Deputy District Attorney Rod Underhill . The attacks led to the formation of the Queer Patrol ( or Q Patrols ) in July 2010 , which consisted of foot patrols specifically designed to protect the LGBT community in downtown Portland . Sarah Mirk of The Portland Mercury attributed the rise in the number of crimes related to gender or sexual identity in 2010 to an increased number of filed police reports , due in part to the Q Patrols . Not all hate crimes were prevented for the remainder of the year , however ; in November 2010 , a man perceived to be gay was severely beaten and left unconscious while walking home in southeast Portland . According to Portland Police , eight bias crimes were reported between January 1 and April 30 , 2011 , half the number reported during the same period in 2010 .

= = = Assault = = =

Brad Forkner and Christopher Rosevear ( aged 23 and 24 , respectively ) were attacked on the Eastbank Esplanade on May 22 , 2011 , after holding hands while walking across the Hawthorne Bridge in Portland , Oregon . Details of the attack were released by Portland Police on May 24 . Forkner and Rosevear said a group of five men followed them from Tom McCall Waterfront Park across the bridge then beat them as they came down a ramp along the Esplanade . According to the description released by Portland Police , " as [ the couple ] walked they knew several men were behind them talking , laughing and pointing but they were not sure it was directed at them . " Three of the five men attacked the couple from behind . Forkner was pushed into a railing and punched multiple times before breaking away to call 9 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 . The attackers reportedly stopped hitting Rosevear on the head , face , back and ribs once Forkner was able to call police . Forkner

later recalled that he did not hear clearly homophobic remarks , but believed the attackers may have been yelling in a foreign language . He had swelling on his face , but Rosevear required stitches in his lip . The victims claimed several witnesses were nearby , but did not offer help in any form . Police immediately began investigating the case as a " bias crime " , noting the couple 's lack of provocation . The five men who attacked Forkner and Rosevear have not been arrested .

The attack was reported by newspapers in the Pacific Northwest and by gay @-@ oriented media outlets nationwide . Sam Adams , Portland 's openly gay mayor , and Police Chief Mike Reese both spoke out against the attack . According to Reese , " Portland is an open and welcoming city where everyone should feel safe . " Adams expressed similar sentiments : " We seek to be the city of the most equal opportunity , and we can only be that city if all people are safe and have a sense of safety on our streets and in our parks . " Cascade AIDS Project , where Forkner was the Pivot Center Coordinator at the time , launched a Facebook campaign following the attack called " Holding Hands , In Solidarity " , encouraging people to post pictures of hand @-@ holding . The Q Center also condemned the attack . The assault once again prompted Q Center volunteers to form Q Patrols as a means of monitoring the streets and reporting hate crimes to police . Initial plans were to have Q Patrols available between 11 pm and 3 am until the weekend of Halloween .

= = Rally = =

Sponsored by Basic Rights Oregon ( BRO ) , Cascade AIDS Project , Pride Northwest , the Q Center , and local churches , the rally was publicized by a single Facebook page just 72 hours prior . This campaign , created separately from Cascade AIDS Project 's hand @-@ holding photo gallery , was specifically to promote the rally . Stephen Cassell , event organizer and Q Center board member , reportedly " thought of the action plan in the middle of the night and quickly posted the idea on Facebook . " The organization Progressive Oregon , which advocates for progressivism within that state , also advertised the event . The purpose of the event , which began at 7 : 30 pm , was to link hands spanning the length of the bridge .

More than 4 @,@ 000 people attended the event . Members of the Community of Welcoming Congregations , a coalition of more than 100 congregations in Oregon that welcome members of the gay community , and the Portland chapter of the Human Rights Campaign , also attended the rally . As demonstrators gathered at the west side of the bridge , the rally began with speeches by Forkner and Rosevear . Forkner described the attack and said the following of discrimination :

This is not the first time I have feared for my safety or my life and , sadly , I don 't expect it to be the last . What I want to talk about is a much larger cultural issue we have with making different people feel like they 're worth less than normal people , as if there is such a thing as " normal " . In this instance , it was because we are gay ... Thousands of people walk the streets of America and yes , even Portland , feeling like they are less than human , that their life is not as valued by society as their other , supposedly more " normal " , peers . The effects of this internalized hatred are endless . They contribute to gang violence , to depression , to self @-@ medicating via alcohol and drug abuse , to sexuality that people feel must be kept secret , explored in dark alleys and bathhouses rather than openly and safely . How can we talk about keeping ourselves safe , about being healthy , about being loved , if we are doing so in secret , if we are hurting in silence ?

Following Forkner 's speech , Basic Rights Oregon executive director Jeana Frazzini thanked the couple , spoke of the symbolism of the hand @-@ holding rally , and encouraged supporters to volunteer for the Q Patrol . During the rally the crowd sang The Beatles ' " I Want to Hold Your Hand " .

According to Cassell , Hands Across Hawthorne marked one of the first instances where Portland 's major LGBT rights organizations worked together on an event other than the Portland Pride Festival . Details of the rally were reported by various gay @-@ oriented national publications . Instinct magazine noted Portland 's ability to gather a crowd of 4 @,@ 000 in support of the LGBT community despite dreary weather . The Huffington Post contributor Chuck Currie , a church minister from Portland , used the attack and rally to question the impact of conservative evangelical religion and other anti @-@ gay rights organizations . Progressive Oregon and Just Out ( an LGBT

newspaper in Portland ) noted the failure of the city 's largest newspaper , The Oregonian , to cover the rally ; the former sent a letter and petition to the paper 's publisher N. Christian Anderson III in response , requesting " fair and balanced " coverage . Peter Bhatia , editor for The Oregonian , responded to the criticism and petition signed by more than 1 @, @ 400 people , by saying the paper 's lack of coverage was a " mistake " caused by " human error " .

One week after the rally , Mayor Sam Adams and his staff linked hands in solidarity . On June 5 , residents of Spokane , Washington , held a similar hand @-@ holding rally in solidarity with the Portland community called " Hands Across Monroe " , crossing the Monroe Street Bridge in Riverfront Park . The event was sponsored by The LGBT Center .