

Saturday, October 23, 2010  
by Barbara Richards

The murder of Chanel Larkin is a hate crime. There are those who don't think we need a hate crimes law because all crimes are hateful. Certainly I agree that all crimes are hateful. I think of striking someone instead of talking about a disagreement or of stealing a wallet or an identity.

A hate crime occurs when the motivation is a person's identity.

In May of this year Chanel (Dana) Larkin was murdered by a man who knew her as a transgender woman, sought her out, and killed her with his own gun at point blank range. The motivation was hate. In a plea bargain where the hate crime law was not used, where an expert's testimony on the closeness of the gun shot was tossed out as opinion not fact, the murderer will perhaps get 25 years for this premeditated act.

The murderer was not tried for a hate crime as it is difficult to prove a hate crime when the only fact allowed is that Chanel is dead from a gun belonging to the murderer, the only witness.

This is a hate crime. It is also hateful that our criminal justice system has not the backbone to try it as such. Such crimes against an individual are also a crime against a community, usually a minority. They are also a crime against the wider community in which everyone seeks the right, the freedom to live in security.

Declaring all such crimes as hate crimes would help each of us to search our hearts to root out hate and replace it with compassion.