



Victim Support Europe

POETRY AS AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE MEASURE AGAINST HATE

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**CRIME IS CRIME.
EVEN ONLINE.**

ONLINE HATE CRIME
AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



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AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE: What is it?

An Alternative Narrative campaign is usually an intervention, either online or offline or across both platforms that offers a positive alternative to hate narratives OR aims to deconstruct or delegitimise hate speech. Campaigns can range from YouTube style social experiments widely disseminated on social media, to undertaking direct street challenges to haters.

Who is it for?

Alternative Narrative Campaigns are created for user groups depending upon identified need and desired target audience.

What it achieves?

The alternative narrative campaigns enable recipients and participants to focus on what they are for (rather than against) by offering positive stories about shared values, open-mindedness, freedom and democracy. Over the course of a campaign participants and beneficiaries will gain skills in:

Countering hate – the power to challenge simplistic narratives constructively, interrogate complex arguments, and develop confidence in confronting persuasive and emotive rhetoric with autonomously generated alter-narratives

‘Other’ awareness – an increased capacity for cognitive, emotional and compassionate empathy; an ability to analyse the motivations for behaviour, viewing things from a different perspective and overcoming fear of ‘the other’.



Does Poetry Have a Social Function?

- People who talk about poetry's social utility often concentrate on content. However, poetry's social function comes not from what it means but from what it is. Its utility is **to shake us out of our standard** buy-stuff-and-watch-TV half life.
- One of poetry's chief aims is to illumine the walls of mystery, the unsayable. I think poetry ought to be perceived not as an engine of meaning but as an opportunity to learn to live in **doubt** and uncertainty.
- Our species is deeply defined by its great surges of reason, but I think it high time we return to elemental awe and wonder. This ritual generates **empathy** and widens our humanity.
- The worth and importance of all poems is at least partially determined by **the context** in which they are read **and the nature of the audience** reading them.
- One good reason to read poems from distant times and places is that **they take us out of our society**, showing us how much emotion and thought isn't at all.



The Role of Poetry in Deconstructing Hate Narratives and Truth-telling (a Belgium-based poet's perspective)



1. Language

We live in a time when language is consciously, and often intentionally, misused and manipulated to serve the ends of those in power. The easy access to language mediums provided by the Internet age we live in, it seems that the decay of language has accelerated, a decay manifesting itself in the ever-widening gap between what is said and what is meant. Language has become the net of lies in which they allow themselves to be entangled.

The polarization in society nowadays is so deep, instead of wanting to hear what the other side has to say, the two sides want to stay deaf to each other. The words spoken drop into the no-man's land in between: a speech act with no listener fails as a speech act and becomes nothing.

2. Poetry

Because poetry has been marked as marginal, it has a certain advantage—let's call it the advantage of the underdog: the resistance of the listener is less pronounced; the listener hasn't already decided not to hear.

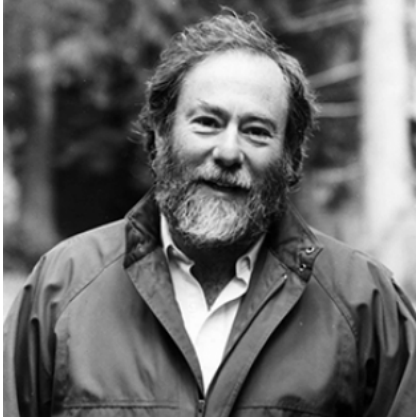
Poetry has the advantages, intrinsic characteristics that mark it as a useful tool for awakening a social conscience, for political activism and protest:

(1) the drive toward truth-telling; (2) the personal accountability of the poetic, and (3) the magic of intertwined meaning and music.

3. The Role of poetry in the present-day context

Poetry challenges the status quo, articulates ethical dilemmas, and tackles the “difficult knowledge” of the day. In the interface between what Wallace Stevens termed “the pressure of reality” and the wonders of talent—in the ongoing interplay between the personal and the political—the true poet, being truthful, may offer us alternative versions of and even redemptive visions for our troubled world.

Spoken word as a response to hate narratives



“Poetry is a great big Yes.
Yes to formalists, yes to free verse writers, yes to surrealists, yes to political poets,
yes to the poets of wordplay and slippery self-consciousness,
yes to the Dadaists, yes to the mystics, yes to the scholar-poets, yes to the
punsters, yes to the anti-poetic poets, yes to the prose-poets,
yes to the poets who write
about a word and to those who write about a people,
yes to the poets who write about a
blade of grass and to those that write about war”
Marvin Bell

It is important to help people to detect hate narratives, propaganda and disinformation:

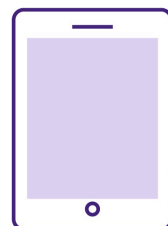
1. Spoken Word as a Critical Thought
2. Word as an Alternative or Counter-story
3. Spoken Word as a Way to Border Cross
4. Spoken Word as Multiple Truths
5. Spoken Word as Social Change

Points of reference: The utility of alternative narratives as a method in campaigning against hate



This presentation takes its point of departure in two recent alternative campaigns which involved poets and artists:

1. **kNOwhate campaign:** January 2019 – September 2019 (<https://www.facebook.com/knowhate/>)
2. **#Crime Is Crime #EvenOnline camapign:** 3 September – 20 November 2019 (crimeiscrime.eu)



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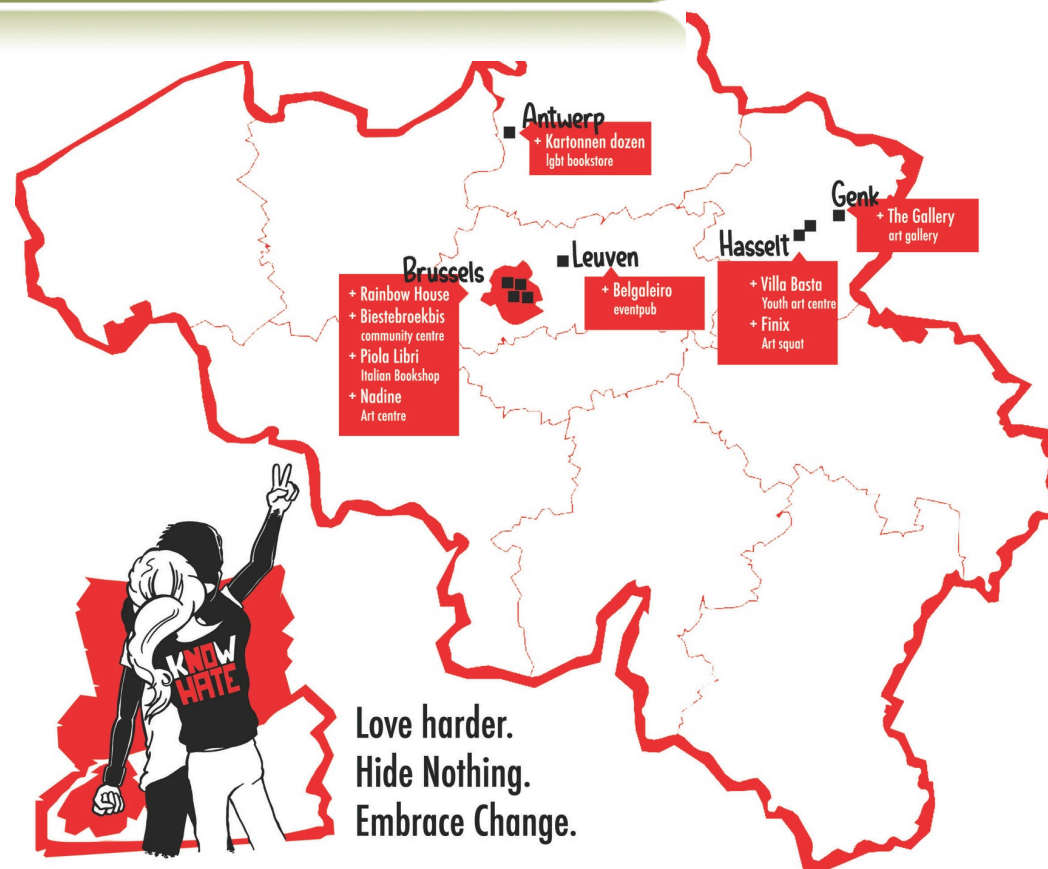
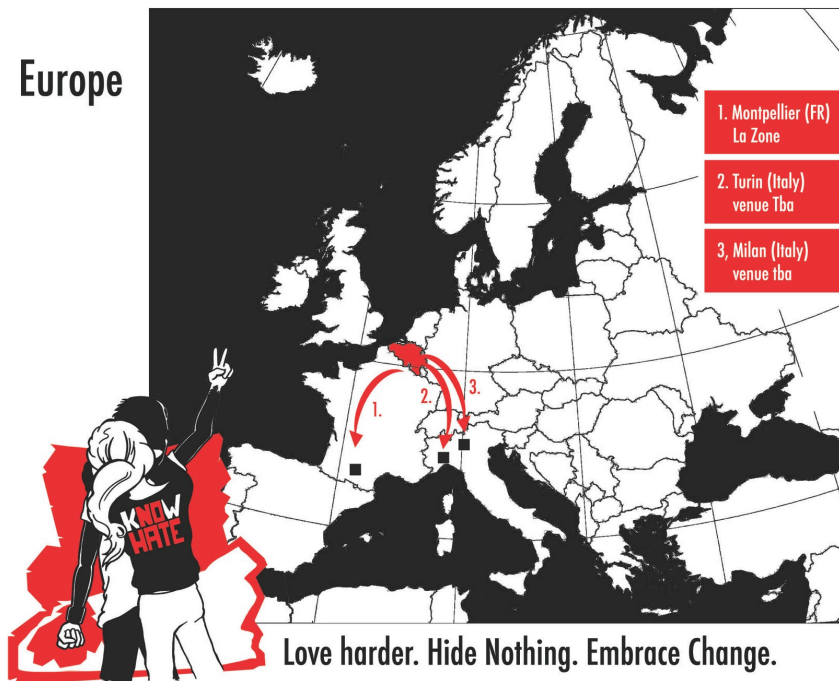
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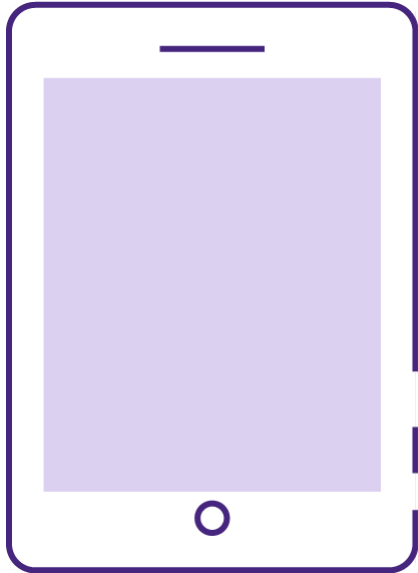
Timeline of KnowHate Events 2019



Europe



<https://crimeiscrime.vse-campaign.eu/>



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#crimeiscrime #evenonline



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ABOUT

UNDERSTANDING
ONLINE HATE SPEECH

THE VOICE
OF VICTIMS

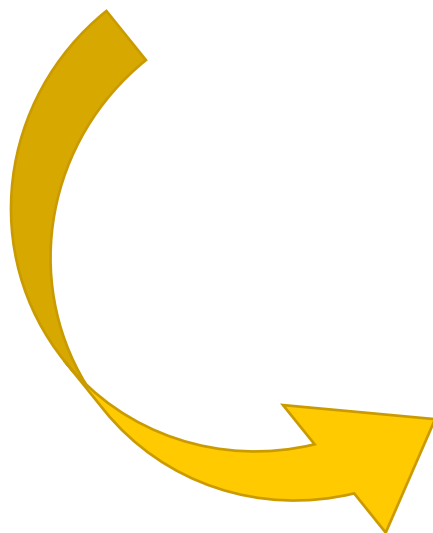
KNOW
YOUR
RIGHTS

PROTECT
YOURSELF
ONLINE

WHAT TO DO IF YOU
ARE A VICTIM?

FIND HELP IN
YOUR COUNTRY

EVENTS



- About
- Understanding online hate speech
- The voice of victims
- Know your rights
- Protect yourself online
- What to do if you are a victim?
- Find help in your country
- Events

Campaigning in collaboration



Artistic Sector: poets from the EU think out loud about cyber hate (online +offline)



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‘Crime Is Crime Even Online ‘ Campaign’s Timeline



1. **Online Teaser Phase Launch - 22 July 2019:** European Day for the Victims of Hate Crime

6 Prominent Poets read their poems on cyber hate (Portuguese Slam Poetry champion Luís Perdigão; Italian Poetry Slam Champion and Italia's Got Talent Simone Savogin; Polish Slam Poetry Champion Rutka Zytel, Belgian Poetry Performers: Inke Gieghase; Bene Kusendila, Marina Kazakova)

+

"Fight hate with respect" videos (Here, the protagonists are brought face-to-face with the victims - and instead of shouting words of hatred, they shout words of respect)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVaVwA177yA>)

2. **Online Main Phase 2 September 2019 - 1 November:** Launching the online campaign (the campaign website, social media action plan)

3. **Offline Reveal Phase 5 November 2019:** Offline Presentation at Conferences

PRESENTATION OF THE CAMPAIGN AT:

Words Are Stones Final Conference

September 24, 2019
Brussels

International Conference LGBTI PEOPLE AND VIOLENCE IN EUROPE: STUDYING ATTITUDES, CHANGING MINDS

September 26 and 27, 2019
Budapest, Hungary

VSE Autumn Conference on Online Victimisation

5 November 2019
Brussels



Concluding Thoughts

1. The primary objective of artistic alternative narratives should be to sow seeds of doubt among at risk communities who are exposed to VE influences, and to highlight viable alternative approaches and behaviours.
2. Alternative narratives are a long term strategy – success is seldom achieved overnight – sustained efforts is most effective.
3. It is important to think of art as an alternative narrative measure against hate in terms of both online and offline. Most successful campaigns are a judicious blend of the two.
4. Governments and communities engaged in alternative narrative campaigns should seek to work with private sector companies and civil society – both digital and traditional media.



Poetry is a defence against darkness; when we contemplate something as profound as killing other people to achieve an objective, poets have an obligation to give voice to doubt.

The words of poets remind us that there are better choices.