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Twitter Fingers can fuel Trigger Fingers

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OP-ED: Twitter Fingers can fuel Trigger Fingers

My friend was attacked when she was 16 years old because she was an undocumented person living in Orange County during the Trump administration. She was dragged across the concrete, spit on, and was called racial slurs.

While unfortunate, her reality is not uncommon for undocumented folks living during tense political moments, especially relating to immigration.

Research has continuously found that certain immigration policies and rhetoric reinforce ideas about who is worthy of living in the United States -- and who is not. In an editorial in *The Politics of Immigration and Education*, it was highlighted that certain immigration policies can create feelings of otherness for most immigrants while simultaneously purporting other nonimmigrant groups as more deserving and valuable.

According to the California Department of Justice, when then-President Trump took office and portrayed a strong nationalist and anti-illegal immigrant front, California experienced a 300% increase in anti-immigrant hate crimes from 2015 to 2016.

I took a deeper look into this existing research.

While interning with the ACLU California Action this past summer, I conducted an empirical study measuring the extent immigrant rhetoric/policy has on hate crimes towards undocumented Latinx population living in California by doing first-hand interviews with hate crime survivors.

I interviewed three people: all Latinx undocumented Women living in major counties (Los Angeles, Orange, and Alameda) throughout the State. These Women are all from Mexican descent -- each being coincidentally born in the same state in Mexico: Oaxaca.

To my surprise, these three women experienced being physically assaulted by random strangers all in the same year: 2016. While being assaulted, these Women note that their abuser used some sort of rhetoric used by then-Republican nominee, Donald Trump. They were called "criminals", "rapists", and "job-stealers". All three Women note that before their assault, there was tension in the air provoked by the 2016 Presidential Election. They noted that they felt uncomfortable

walking around their own communities, even despite the large minority population within these communities.

One woman stated: “I did not feel safe being a Latina in my hometown. The Presidential Election was a pretty big deal for us and was a melting pot for heinous side comments and uncomfortable comments. I definitely saw something violent coming”. She was living in Los Angeles at the time when she was assaulted.

Another woman stated “I could feel something coming. The nasty immigration comments by the Right became normalized to the point where I would have to carry a pepper sprayer with me everywhere I go. Unfortunately, the sprayer didn’t help me much”. She was living in Orange County at the time when she was assaulted.

As shown, these Women’s hate crimes were a manifestation of violent immigration discussions happening throughout the country in 2016. All three of these Women were pushed, shoved, and even punched in a time where harsh comments were being directed at people that looked like them. Hate crimes can often be a description of one’s time and ideals. This study, along with other research, briefly validates this.