

1 ***SENATOR SHIRLEY WINSLEY, R-28***

2 **Interview with Joy Adams**

3 **30 October 1998 – Olympia, Washington**

4 **2 November 1998 – Fircrest, Washington**

5

6 **EARLY LIFE**

7 My mother was a second generation Norwegian immigrant, my father was third generation. In other  
8 words, my father's grandparents both came from Norway, as did my mother's father. As a child,  
9 before the age of nine, I probably thought I'd live on a farm in Minnesota my entire life. When I  
10 was a child, I just wanted to survive. Maybe that's all I want to do as a politician, is survive.

11

12 I come from a political family. When my mother's dad first came from Norway and homesteaded in  
13 northern Minnesota, he was elected the first supervisor in Hill River Township, which at that time  
14 was similar to the office of county commissioner. Other family members were supervisors, or  
15 county commissioners, county assessors, county treasurers, and school board directors. One was  
16 elected to the Legislature in 1871 in Minnesota, and another ran for Legislature in Iowa.

17

18 I was raised on a farm in northern Minnesota, close to a little town called Fosston. When my  
19 mother and dad were first married in 1930, my dad managed a grocery store in Lake of the Woods,  
20 close to the Canadian border. My grandfather had a country store, and my dad worked there for  
21 many years. He answered an ad in the newspaper for manager/operator of the Lake of the Woods  
22 Country Store. He considered it a good opportunity to run a store alone. I think my dad thought  
23 he'd go into the grocery business. When my mother was pregnant with me – they were married five  
24 years before I was born – they returned to Hill River Township and my dad for whatever reason  
25 went into the cattle hauling business.

1 Buying and hauling livestock doesn't sound like a major business, but when one realizes everyone  
2 lives in farm communities and raises livestock, that's where your money is besides crops. Years ago  
3 farmers did a little bit of everything: they raised chickens for eggs; they raised cows primarily for  
4 beef and milk, they made their own cheese and butter. You only needed one bull! Milk, cream, eggs  
5 were the same as cash. If you had a crop that failed you would have something else to sell. It isn't  
6 like today, where today's farmer is a wheat farmer – he doesn't do extended farming.

7

8 In 1943, Dad was loading cattle, and he was guiding the cattle chute while the driver was backing up  
9 the truck, and my dad was pinned against the barn. He broke three ribs, which punctured the artery  
10 by the heart. And at age thirty-five he was dead. After that, your whole life changes. And at that  
11 time, in '43, the Social Security Act didn't take care of [survivors], that wasn't until later. But there  
12 was a war going on, so in 1944 my mother took us three girls – Beverly was four, Louise was eleven  
13 months, and I was a couple months shy of nine years old – to Tacoma to become Helga the Riveter  
14 in the Todd Shipyards. So here I am in an urban area, a long way from where I spent my childhood.  
15 I went to Stewart [Junior High], Lincoln [High School], Tacoma Community College and Pacific  
16 Lutheran University.

17

18 I've always had a really strong work ethic. That is something I inherited. People who came through  
19 the Depression and lived on very little ... I took my kids back there and showed them my country  
20 school, which is still standing. I went to a one-room school for a couple years of my life. It's just a  
21 different life my kids will never experience. But I always had responsibilities, and I sort of think  
22 today the reason kids get in trouble is that they don't have home responsibilities: bringing in the  
23 firewood and the eggs, feeding the cattle and pigs, or in my case, my pet goat. Picking up eggs was  
24 my job after school, along with bringing in the firewood. If I wanted to go to a girlfriend's house

1 after school, I had to come home first, change my clothes, and do my chores. You never thought  
2 about doing your chores at eight o'clock at night. You couldn't do them in the dark, [because] we  
3 didn't have electricity, and kerosene lamps didn't give much light. You had to have your schoolwork  
4 done, your chores done. Playing was a privilege when it was allowed, and it wasn't allowed very  
5 often. You didn't have a lot of freedom. Farm kids lived a very bleak life. My mother had it a lot  
6 worse than I did – I didn't have to milk cows. But my mother, whose father died when she was ten  
7 years old, milked cows before and after school. Between her mother, brothers and sister, they  
8 milked twenty to thirty cows at each milking. Think of those cold Minnesota winters! Forty below  
9 zero with deep snow, and walking out to the barn to milk cows early in the morning by the light of a  
10 lantern. It was a lot of work.

11  
12 I didn't show any interest in politics in school, I didn't have time. I never got involved in school  
13 politics, because you needed money for the signs and such, and I never had any money. I had to  
14 work. So after school, junior high and high school, I had a job to go to. In junior high I was really  
15 active in plays. I could memorize lines easily. Anytime I tried out for a part I got it. I can't  
16 remember the names of any of the plays, but I remember one had the word "paraphernalia", in  
17 eighth grade. I remember that was a big word, and I wanted to make sure I pronounced it right. I  
18 just remember that word. I was involved in school choirs. But in high school, I really wasn't  
19 involved in a lot, because of my jobs.

20  
21 I had to work, we needed the money. I had a better life than my mother and grandmother had, but  
22 I had to buy my own school clothes and other things. I didn't have time for play. The first job I got  
23 was babysitting for a neighbor, I was doing a lot of baby-sitting by the time I was twelve. A  
24 neighbor lady wanted somebody to come in and start her dinner. And one thing led to another, and

1 soon I was starting dinner and cleaning house. Pretty soon I could fix dinner by myself, she usually  
2 just wanted me to wash the vegetables and get them ready, but pretty soon I got to the point where I  
3 could cook the meal, so when they got home I had everything ready. When I was sixteen I was  
4 hired by a wealthy family in the north end of Tacoma to do the same thing, and take care of their  
5 two kids. When I was a senior I got a job working in a bank.

6  
7 My mother, after the war, had worked for a lot of rich people. Scandinavians were sought after.  
8 They were good at cleaning houses. Both my mother and her sister did housework. My mother  
9 worked almost until the day she died. One family paid her royally, because they didn't want to lose  
10 her. She cooked big meals for their big shindigs. My mother made a lot of breads and pastries,  
11 Swedish meatballs (actually Norwegian meatballs) for these affairs. It's something you just learn by  
12 osmosis, you look and learn. I never learned to cook out of a cookbook, I learned by watching my  
13 mother, as I'm sure she learned by watching her mother.

## 14 15 **START IN POLITICS**

16 One time somebody asked my mother, "When did Shirley decide to become a politician?" She  
17 laughed and said, "She was born one." And I thought that was pretty clever, but it's probably true.  
18 I'm different than my two sisters. Politics is not a job for the timid. It's also not a life for anyone  
19 who doesn't like to work hard. I've been in office, this is my 24<sup>th</sup> year. You don't stay in office  
20 unless you work hard and have something going, you can't be timid because there's a lot of  
21 controversial issues.

22  
23 I met my husband when I was a senior in high school, we were married in 1952. After we had a  
24 family I decided to go back to school at age 34. I was involved in both Kennedy campaigns when I

1 was a Democrat. I was a coordinator for the Robert Kennedy campaign in 1968, and I decided to go  
2 over to school and get a degree in Political Science. I didn't know what I was going to do with it!  
3 But I was just interested enough, that I thought, well, why not? And I thought, well, maybe I'll take  
4 a biology class, and some chemistry, and if I pass those, maybe I'll keep going. [laughs] And I did!  
5 The only B I got in college was in biology. And then I took geology... you know, if I had started  
6 earlier, I probably would have majored in science, gone into medicine. Because I think I could take  
7 the blood and guts. I used to think as a kid, I could never do it. Back in country schools, they  
8 didn't encourage girls to take science. You were pushed into Gregg shorthand, bookkeeping. I took  
9 all these things because I knew I didn't have any money to go to college. So you learn all the things  
10 you need to walk out and get a good job in some office. I had good grades, and I took all the  
11 business courses that Lincoln offered. And there's nothing wrong with that, but I didn't know that  
12 was a path I was taking. I didn't take the political path until I was in my thirties.

13  
14 When I got to PLU in 1971, I applied for an internship and worked in the Senate. And then the  
15 Senate hired me in '72, '73, and '74. I worked four sessions, first as an intern, then as staff for the  
16 Constitution and Elections [Committee]. In '73 I staffed the Labor Committee. I also did  
17 newsletters, news releases, and research, besides [my committee duties]. And then in '74 I went over  
18 to the House and worked as an analyst for the Ways & Means Committee. Property tax was my  
19 specialty.

20  
21 I just sort of fell into [politics]. [in 1960] it seemed like our mailbox was always filled with  
22 Republican campaign brochures. We lived in a Democratic district, the 29<sup>th</sup>, primarily blue collar,  
23 but it seemed like the Democrats weren't doing anything. And so, I don't know, I must have  
24 complained to somebody – I think I called headquarters! – and the next thing you know they were

1 sending me literature and signing me up. I worked for Senators Warren Magnusen and Henry  
2 “Scoop” Jackson. In 1962, I had a coffee for Senator Scoop Jackson, in Fircrest, and a lot of people  
3 came. Can you imagine a United States Senator coming to Fircrest? He picked up my son and held  
4 him for awhile, and afterwards I thought, “Golly, I didn’t take a picture!” We were so in awe we  
5 didn’t think of the camera.

6  
7 I didn’t do as much for Jack Kennedy[’s campaign] as I probably should have, but I did a lot for  
8 Scoop Jackson, for Warren Magnuson, and I did a lot for Robert Kennedy. That whole era – I  
9 mean, I wasn’t involved like you see people today, but I went out and did my little bit, my  
10 doorbelling. Basically that’s how I got started in politics. It was a good training ground, working for  
11 the Kennedys, you really learn a lot. They had a good network, Arthur Schlesinger was writing  
12 their material, and Ted Sorensen, a tremendous speech writer ... it was an era of youth, young  
13 people, I think if anything what the Kennedys did was they got young people involved and  
14 registered to vote, they got them to the polls. That was the thrust, anyway.

15

## 16 **FIRST POLITICAL OFFICE**

17 I was more of a candidate person in the Democratic party than a part of the party machinery, per se.  
18 I try to vote my district, and I don’t think I’ve ever done any differently. I don’t think it matters  
19 what party you’re with if you have a good feeling for your district.

20

21 In April of [the 1974] session, Richard Kelley resigned. [At the time I was working for the House]  
22 and I decided that if I could do all these newsletters, all this research, and be staff for three different  
23 committees (in different years) – with all this background, why didn’t I apply for this position? I  
24 didn’t think I had a chance to win, but I did! Generally you have to go through the process of

1 Precinct Committee Officers and all this stuff and work to get the appointment, and then the county  
2 commissioners make the appointment. With three men as county commissioners I never thought  
3 I'd get the appointment. I was the first woman to ever serve in the 28<sup>th</sup> district. I was there when  
4 the special session started.

5  
6 When I was a Democrat in 1974, I lost to a doctor [Ted Haley] who outspent me four or five to one.  
7 I think I ran a bad ad, I was new at this thing and someone had me run a 'woman power' ad, and I  
8 think that turned a lot of people off. Anyhow, I lost, and maybe that was good, because for a  
9 Democrat in [the 28<sup>th</sup>] district every election would be an uphill fight. I lost the election by 600  
10 votes; I made some mistakes, and I was outspent.

11  
12 I switched parties in the '76 election and won, and I've been winning ever since. There was a vacant  
13 position in the House in the 28<sup>th</sup> district that year. Helmut Juelsing chose not to run again. He'd  
14 been in the Legislature a long time, and he lived here in Fircrest, a few blocks over. He was a good  
15 friend. There were some wealthy Republicans, high up in the party, who said if I would run they'd  
16 give me \$4,000. Can you imagine? That sounded like a lot of money back then. It's like nothing  
17 now; then it was half my campaign. He had a campaign manager who'd been helping him a long  
18 time, and she announced in January that she was going to run. I filed at the end of July; I decided  
19 the day before filing to run, and I won by 250 votes in the primary. Since that time I've never had  
20 less than 65% of the vote. Even in that election I think I came up with 65% in the general. In the  
21 last two elections I've been the highest vote-getter in the state: 74% in 1992; when I ran for Senate  
22 in 1996, I had 72%. I think that's because I get a lot of Democrat votes and Independent votes. I'll  
23 get Republicans running against me in the primary, but they split their vote. Some Republicans will

1 vote for me, and some for my opponent, but its the Democrats and the Independents that make the  
2 difference.

3  
4 I ran for County Council in 1981. Pierce County changed the form of county government from  
5 commission to council in November 1980. I did one little mailing, I think it cost me about \$3,000.  
6 Some colonel retired from Fort Lewis and ran against me. He came and knocked at my door one  
7 Saturday, I told him I was too busy to doorbell. [chuckles] I knew he wasn't going to win. I served  
8 on the Pierce County Council from April '81, to January '85. But for two years, '81 and '82, I also  
9 was a [legislator], so it's confusing. The Tacoma News Tribune made a big stink about my two jobs,  
10 but my Norwegian stubbornness got the best of me and I said hell with you, I'll stay in office.  
11 [laughs] And I did!

12  
13 I didn't run in '82 for the Legislature, I was out for two years. And then in 1984, Art Broback and  
14 Stan Johnson were [the 28<sup>th</sup> district] Representatives, and Senator Ted Haley resigned. Broback  
15 didn't like Johnson, and they ran against each other. Now I could have gotten into [the Senate race],  
16 and I would have won. But Johnson had already started raising a lot of money, and I think that  
17 scared me, I didn't want to get into another one of those expensive races. I knew if I ran for the  
18 House I was a shoo-in. Johnson won [the Senate seat]. But Broback, who took my seat for two  
19 years while I was on the Council, gave up his House seat to run against Johnson for the Senate seat  
20 and he lost. I won back my seat. You've got to take advantage of the openings, and it was a big  
21 drop in pay, and maybe not the smartest thing to do, but it has worked out.

22



## 1 WOMEN AS LEGISLATORS

2 My family was real supportive [of my political activities]. My husband has made all my signs and  
3 helped with doorbelling. My kids haven't done much doorbelling, they were in jobs and college  
4 when I started in 1974. Actually my biggest support came from my parents. I miss them, they could  
5 stuff envelopes like you wouldn't believe, eight or nine thousand envelopes at a time. My stepfather  
6 used to go out with my husband and put up the signs, help make them, paint them, and [he] was real  
7 good about stuffing envelopes and doing stuff. I'd go out doorbelling and they'd come over to my  
8 house and stuff envelopes, and make lunches for all these people at the house who were stuffing  
9 envelopes. And now they're both gone, and I don't have them anymore. My aunt's 86 years old, I  
10 found out I can't have her stuff envelopes anymore, with labels on them. She doesn't hear so well  
11 anymore...I showed her exactly what to do last time, and it took me three days to undo what she  
12 did. There wasn't a one in the sequence in order, not one. She just heaped the envelopes in a big  
13 pile and picked them up. They had to be in a certain order, because we'd put the labels on first! She  
14 can still stuff envelopes, I just have to figure out a different way to do it.

15  
16 My husband got a kick out of this little old lady, she probably was about 75 at the time, and he was  
17 doorbelling. And my husband went to the door, it was probably in 1977, or 1979, and she said, "I  
18 think Shirley should stay home and take care of her children!" And we didn't really have any  
19 children left to care for. Two years later, he went to the same house again! He said, "The minute I  
20 rang that doorbell and I saw that woman I remembered, but it was too late, I was already there!"  
21 [laughs] And she said the same thing, "I told you last time, Shirley should stay home and take care  
22 of her children!" I don't hear that anymore, I guess I look old enough now that folks don't worry  
23 about that. But anyhow, those were the biases.

24

1 The women's movement overall has had an effect [on legislation]. There's always been a few  
2 women in the House, off and on. The first big bill down in Olympia in 1977 was the rape laws. I'm  
3 not sure we even passed it that year, but every year we tighten it up a little bit. I made a list of all the  
4 health issues today – twenty years ago you'd never heard of sexual assault, domestic violence laws,  
5 insurance discrimination against women, assisted suicide, organ transplants, cloning, managed care,  
6 genetic discrimination, death with dignity, pain management, Viagra! [laughs] You never had an  
7 abortion issue, same-sex marriage, gay rights, it's just such a big social change. We've looked at  
8 women's issues like first steps prenatal care for children, taking care of them afterwards. I was on  
9 the first domestic violence bill – I remember that one – it was a long fight to get that passed and  
10 funded. I think some of the education issues, or most of them, are women who have fought for  
11 change. Men always give it lip service but they didn't do much.

12

### 13 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

14 I think if I look back twenty-five years from now, I think the health care reform bill in 1993 –  
15 although the conservatives that came in in 1994 overturned it – I think someday that bill will  
16 become law. I would say the health care reform bill and the Basic Health Plan in '93 were major  
17 reforms. I think that health care in America is a sad commentary, because only South Africa and  
18 America don't have health care for everybody, all the other nations in the world do. And I think  
19 that we're going to have to make health care an issue. I think the 1993 health care reform bill *was* a  
20 patient's bill of rights. People should be entitled to insurance, and have access to the health care  
21 system, and they should have a *quality* health care system. Nobody said it should be for free, but if  
22 people don't get insurance the taxpayers are going to pay [their bills], and the bill is going to get  
23 higher and higher every year. There's no free lunch, somebody's paying for these people. When

1 hospitals doctors aren't reimbursed, fees are higher for everybody else who pays. I don't understand  
2 in America why we can't figure that one out.

3  
4 I've passed many bills. I was one of the sponsors in the House of the Equal Rights Amendment.  
5 One of the bills I passed put a \$50 fine on litter, and you wouldn't believe how hard it was to get a  
6 \$50 fine. I must have introduced that bill three times before it finally passed. I sponsored a bill to  
7 make it illegal to put a dog in the back of a pickup, never thought that would pass, but it did. I've  
8 had my name on a lot of property tax bills through the years. Somebody said I had more bills pass  
9 than any other legislator. You know, I'm not one of these people to get out and burst my buttons  
10 for the number of bills I passed. I've passed a lot of senior citizens' bills, long term care is another  
11 issue I was out in front on. There were so many insurance and banking bills because of my  
12 chairmanship, but I had a lot of major legislation in the House of Representatives.

13  
14 I think more than anything I just fight for money for my district. I got a half a million dollars for  
15 the voc-tech school one year, \$500,000 the next year for the Clover Park School District to settle a  
16 lawsuit. I've got to try to get them another \$500,000 in the 1999 session. I've had some pension  
17 bills, maybe two or three through the years, COLA bills. This year I got the cities and the county  
18 money for crime. In the budget, I got what is called 'sales-tax equalization' this time. So while I'm  
19 passing a bunch of bills, I've got a hunk of that budget that I'm working on. When I was on the  
20 County Council I got all the streets in Tillicum paved. But I always got money for parks or money  
21 for the cities and try to work to make my community a better community.

22  
23 In the Senate I sponsored a handicap parking measure which raised the fine from \$25 to \$50. But  
24 then after I did that, Darlene Fairley got elected, and it took somebody like Darlene Fairley, walking

1 with two crutches, to get the fine increased. Darlene is elected and gets it raised to \$250, and last  
2 year we raised it to \$500. Nobody dares to vote *no*, because of the TV cameras. Who's going to sit  
3 there and watch this woman plead and tell how bad things are, who's going to sit in front of the TV  
4 cameras and vote no? Even if it was a thousand dollars, I think it would have passed!

5  
6 [Televising of proceedings] has an effect, particularly when you get into sensitive issues.<sup>4</sup> The  
7 cameras give an opportunity for some of the Don Bentons and Pam Roaches of the world [to  
8 grandstand], I don't know if it helps them any. My husband watches, and he's an impartial jurist,  
9 and he says he can pick out when they're playing for the cameras, when they're not being sincere.  
10 So I think that the average citizen sees through it. I don't know if it helps or hurts, but it keeps  
11 everybody in their seats more, I think. There's some pluses and some minuses. Nobody smokes  
12 anymore, in the House or the Senate. Nobody drinks coffee at their desk – though my husband says  
13 I was chewing gum one day, so I've got to watch that. Little things like that.

14

## 15 **CURRENT STATE OF POLITICS**

16 I suppose I would do it over again, given the time and the situation. I served in the House for  
17 fifteen years, County Council for four, and then I've been in the Senate almost eight. If I don't run  
18 again I have twenty-three years in the Legislature, four in local government, twenty-seven years  
19 altogether. I don't know what I'll do [in the future years].

20

21 Several changes over the years – twenty-seven years is a long time, but it seems like yesterday. I think  
22 one change is the hate.... Politics itself used to be more fun for everybody than it is today. People

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<sup>4</sup> TVW began televising legislative proceedings in 1995.

1 say, "Oh, the Republicans!", or "Oh, the Democrats!", but everyone was friendly, you wouldn't get  
2 this hissing you get today.

3  
4 Years ago, I'm not so sure I was so involved in the party per se, as I was with candidates. I was  
5 more of a candidate person, I still am. There are good candidates in both parties; the Republicans  
6 don't always put up good candidates, neither do Democrats. I think you're voting blind if you vote  
7 a straight party ticket, which I've never done. It's pretty silly to do that. You can be involved in  
8 politics without being involved in the party machine. I'm still not. I like looking for various  
9 candidates that I think are good candidates and have good leadership qualities and would do a good  
10 job if they were elected.

11  
12 I don't think a candidate running for Congress or the U.S. Senate today does anything anymore than  
13 sit on the phone and dial for dollars. Politics has changed a lot in the last thirty to forty years,  
14 because of the money, because of television. A candidate doesn't get on a train and go to every little  
15 burg like Harry Truman did. Campaigning has changed. You know, if you're running a campaign  
16 on a shoestring, you can't afford to buy television spots. Now I watch candidates spend thousands  
17 of dollars on polling, television, radio. Things are a lot different. I think we have a different  
18 Congress and Legislature because of it. Years ago, no candidate spent a lot of money to get elected,  
19 everyone was sort of in the same boat.

20  
21 I think people used to have more fun – the Legislature used to be a lot of fun, a *lot* of fun. I mean,  
22 it's not that legislators *shouldn't* have fun, or that legislation and the process *isn't* fun, but years ago  
23 there wasn't the stress and the tension that there is today. Legislators had good relationships with  
24 each other. Some people don't understand the give and take of politics.

1

2 I would say that I have a hard time with people who claim to be “Christians” and then turn around  
3 and just say nothing but unkind things about individuals they disagree with. If somebody doesn’t  
4 agree with the way I think, or the way I vote, that doesn’t make me a bad person or legislator. If a  
5 legislator feels they’re representing their district, then why should I criticize the way they vote? It’s  
6 wrong to openly criticize another member. I suppose this has gone on a long time; it seems like  
7 there’s much more negativism today than in the past. When I came to the Legislature, Republicans  
8 and Democrats would go to the lunchroom and mix.

9

10 All these political consultants are ruining politics. They’re out to feather their own nests and make  
11 money, and supposedly get whoever they’re working for elected. I think in this next election it  
12 could prove that they un-elected some people. I think if Ray Schow and Jeannette Wood are  
13 defeated,<sup>5</sup> it’s not because of Ray and Jeanette being poor legislators, but due to the Republican  
14 party putting out all these terrible ads against their opponents. Are we kidding ourselves? Its crazy.  
15 We put out a lot of propaganda that is absolutely unreal. I think the political consultants are  
16 basically to blame for a lot of the propaganda and giving politics a dirty reputation. Campaigning is  
17 such big business today. I think candidates have got to get back to running their own campaigns.  
18 Jeanette Wood had to put an ad in the newspapers apologizing for the propaganda that came out!  
19 What kind of position are we putting our candidates in, that they have to apologize for the political  
20 consultants’ hate propaganda? That’s what’s going on, and it’s so depressing. That’s my good  
21 friend, and I don’t want to see her defeated. I can’t believe that somebody in Seattle, in the  
22 Republican party, is printing such embarrassing advertisements that she had to take an ad out

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<sup>5</sup> Senator Ray Schow and Senator Jeannette Wood were defeated in their 1998 re-election bids.

1 apologizing for something that she knew nothing about. Anyhow, that's what's going on in the real  
2 world of politics today.

3  
4 I think the Christian Coalition folks are pretty scary people. I mean, you hear about doctors being  
5 shot through a window. I had an amendment on the floor to put [a ban on] partial birth [abortions]  
6 in statute and make it a felony. That wasn't enough for the Christian Right. They really want to do  
7 away with abortions, they really want to dictate to doctors. They just don't want doctors doing  
8 abortions.

9  
10 I was watching *This Week on ABC* this morning, and George Will said, "There's a civil war in the  
11 Republican party." And I thought, finally somebody's admitted this! [laughs] He thinks the  
12 election this year is reflective of party warfare. I'm not so sure today if I would run for politics  
13 today, knowing the climate of hate that exists.

14

15 [END]