

**Addressing Online Hate and Radicalization
Hearings Before the
Committee on Civil and Human Rights
New York City Council
New York, New York
November 16, 2020**

In advance of the Civil and Human Rights Committee oversight hearing on *Addressing Online Hate and Radicalization*, we write to provide you the views of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) Action Fund. We appreciate the invitation to participate in this important Committee hearing and ask that this statement be included as part of the official hearing record.

Founded in 1971, SPLC's mission is ***to be a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people.***

Since then, SPLC lawyers have worked to shut down some of the nation's most violent white supremacist groups by winning crushing, multimillion-dollar jury verdicts on behalf of their victims. We have helped dismantle vestiges of Jim Crow, reformed juvenile justice practices, shattered barriers to equality for women, children, the LGBT community and the disabled, and worked to protect low-wage immigrant workers from exploitation.

SPLC began tracking white supremacist activity in the 1980's, during a resurgence of the Klan and other organized extremist hate groups. Today, the SPLC is the premier U.S. non-profit organization monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists. In the early 1990s, the SPLC launched its pioneering Teaching Tolerance program to provide educators with free, anti-bias classroom resources such as classroom documentaries and lesson plans. Teaching Tolerance reaches millions of schoolchildren with award-winning curricular materials that promote understanding of our nation's history and respect for others, helping educators create inclusive, equitable school environments.

The SPLC Action Fund is dedicated to fighting for racial justice alongside impacted communities in pursuit of equity and opportunity for all. Along with our partners at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), we work primarily in the Southeast United States where we have offices in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C. The SPLC Action Fund promotes policies and laws that will eliminate the structural racism and inequalities that fuel oppression of people of color, immigrants, young people, women, low-income people, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Myth Busting about Online Radicalization: False Narratives Can Lead to Bad Policymaking

Prevalence

Too often our discussions of online radicalization begin and end with a discussion of how much extremism exists online and the many and diverse social media platforms that extremists currently utilize. It is particularly troubling to consider the growing prevalence of online extremism as individuals – especially children and adolescents – are spending substantial amounts of time on social media platforms, alone and with less supervision, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But prevalence alone does not answer the questions we have about whether individuals are being influenced by this easily accessible material and, if so, in what ways? We know far more about the extent or prevalence of online extremist material – and the availability of networking – than we know about how social media and gaming platforms facilitate the radicalization process. What we do know is that very few people radicalize toward violent extremism, and so the challenge becomes how to best prevent targeted violence carried out by so few but that afflicts tragedy too often on so many.

Causality

Obviously, given the growing role of digital media in society generally, active online involvement among extremists is not surprising. Especially in the aftermath of a targeted hate crime or terrorist incident, many sources routinely cite the Internet as the “primary cause” of radicalization – especially among right-wing extremists. But these claims reinforce a sense that we know more than we actually do about the process of online radicalization. As J.M. Berger has written, “while there has been “a lot of attention and funding for fighting online activity compared with other avenues for radicalization...there are *still no established causal links between online extremism and offline violence.*”¹

Offline Influences

A common caveat in studies of online radicalization involves the admission that it is unclear whether the individuals included in these samples were radicalized by the exposure to the online extremist content or whether they were radicalized offline or through some combination of on and offline material. Too frequently our discussion of online radicalization and how to best respond makes two false assumptions:

- 1) Each person is equally likely to be exposed to online extremism; and
- 2) Each person exposed to online extremism is equally likely to become radicalized.

Neither of these assumptions are correct. First, we know that some individuals are more likely to be exposed to online extremism because of their personal interests, Internet search tendencies, and other factors. And second, we know that, when presented with the same extremist material, some people are more susceptible than others. It is not surprising that some people are “primed” for radicalization by the dominant culture around them – including systemic racism and white supremacy – as reflected in both media and civil society.

Naturally, this priming occurs uniquely in each individual’s life, informed by experiences offline and online. This greater susceptibility may result from a host of different physical world factors, including family situation, mental and cognitive health, and unresolved trauma. These

¹ Berger, J. M. (2018). *Extremism*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

offline factors make it difficult to determine how online influences affect the radicalization process.

In reality, therefore, no single source of influence is likely to produce a particular outcome. It is clear that the number of people exposed to online extremism dwarfs the number of people who actually commit targeted hate crimes or terror attacks. This should discourage overly simplistic explanations of how extremism online “causes” radicalization.

Redirecting, Quarantining and Deplatforming Online Hate

Clearly, there is no single piece of policy or technological fix to a problem that is deeply rooted in our social fabric and country’s history. However, there has been some indication of the effectiveness of the tech industry’s “Redirect Method.” While several different iterations of Redirect have been developed, the basic idea is to “prevent unobstructed access to extremist content”² – to identify individuals searching for extremist content online and redirect them to either counter messaging or other content that might diminish the influence of extremist content. This technique requires more thorough study and evaluation and far more transparency and buy-in from social media companies. In a report released in May, the Tech Transparency Project (TTP) found that Facebook’s “redirect tool even failed to work on groups that Facebook has explicitly banned” and that “even organizations that have ‘Nazi’ or ‘Ku Klux Klan’ in their names escaped the redirect effort.”³ TTP quantified Facebook’s failures as follows, as the company claimed to be “redirecting users who search for terms associated with white supremacy or hate groups to the Page for “Life After Hate,” an organization that promotes tolerance—[but the function] only worked in 6% (14) of the 221 searches for white supremacist organizations.”

Another widely discussed approach to countering the highly accessible nature of online hate and extremism involves a call for tech companies to more aggressively quarantine, de-platform, or shut down accounts of online extremists based on breaches of their own user agreements. The logic behind this approach recognizes several things:

- Mainstream platforms help to legitimize online extremists;
- The powerful algorithms maintained by these platforms provide an increasingly broad audience and a megaphone to instantly promote their propaganda and hateful messages.

Yet, de-platforming may have unintentional consequences that undermine the effectiveness of the approach. A 2019 Anti-Defamation League’s (2019) study of Twitter’s de-platforming efforts⁴ showed migration from closed accounts from Twitter to Gab, a platform much more reinforcing, since it is more heavily populated with white supremacists and various other types of right-wing extremists. In short, the effectiveness in reducing the threat of extremists by forcing them off platforms is unclear.

Deplatforming erodes the ability of extremists to recruit widely, cultivate larger audiences for propaganda, while also damaging efforts to monetize their work in simpler ways. But the method is limited in its long-term efficacy and does nothing to address aspects of our society that create drivers for white extremism, including systemic white supremacy, our deeply

² Todd C. Helmus and Kurt Klein, *Assessing Outcomes of Online Campaigns Countering Violent Extremism: A Case Study of the Redirect Method* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018).

³ <https://www.techtransparencyproject.org/articles/white-supremacist-groups-are-thriving-on-facebook>

⁴ Anti-Defamation League, *Quantifying Hate: A Year of Anti-Semitism on Twitter*, 2019.

polarizing political climate and the predominance of anti-immigrant and nativist messages and policies within it, and more.

Writing for *The Atlantic* in 2019, JM Berger notes that “Deplatforming helped reduce the overall reach of white-supremacist propaganda, but users who migrated to less prominent platforms quickly created a pressure-cooker environment where radicalization to violence could take place very quickly, with adherents goading one another into ever more extreme views and actions.”⁵

Despite these misconceptions and uncertainty, it is clear that online extremism is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Here are several approaches that work:

Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the Covid-19 Era: A Parents and Caregivers Guide to Online Radicalization

We have known for years that it can be all too easy for individuals to become radicalized without even leaving home. The proliferation of extremist spaces and content online has created new and powerful avenues for radicalization, especially for young people who are often the targets of radical-right propaganda.

This year, with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing most Americans to remain at home for months on end amid great social, political and economic uncertainty, the threat of online radicalization must be addressed with increasing innovation and attention. To address the issue, and to give parents and caregivers a resource to know how to respond, SPLC, in partnership with American University’s Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), developed a guide to help parents, caregivers and educators understand how extremists are exploiting this time of uncertainty and targeting children and young adults. The guide, *Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era*,⁶ provides tangible steps to counter the threat of online radicalization, including information on the new risks during the COVID-19 crisis, ways parents can identify warning signs that their kids might be vulnerable to extremist propaganda, ways to build resilience to those narratives, and proactive approaches that can help young people be less vulnerable to extremist rhetoric when they do encounter it.

This time of heightened anxiety is a perfect storm for extremist propaganda and recruitment. The more than 70 million children and young adults who are now learning online – primarily at home, away from structured activities, dislocated from their peers, frequently in families under economic and psychological distress – have become a target for extremists, who promise easy answers and scapegoats to blame for their situation.

The SPLC PERIL Guide describes new risks in the COVID-19 era this way:

Unprecedented time online. 55 million children and adolescents in the US have seen their school activities moved online since the outbreak of COVID-19. Nearly 15 million college students have switched to online learning as well. The hours previously spent at school or in classrooms under the supervision of trusted adults are now largely spent online.

⁵ J.M. Berger, *The Strategy of Violent White Supremacy Is Evolving*, *The Atlantic*, August 7, 2019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/the-new-strategy-of-violent-white-supremacy/595648/>

⁶ https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/splc_peril_covid_parents_guide.pdf

Distracted parents and caregivers. Work has not stopped for most parents and caregivers. Some adults must work online during much or most of the day. Many other adults must continue to go to work outside the home, leaving children's online activities unsupervised. Parents and caregivers are relaxing screen time restrictions in order to find more time for their own work, both in and outside the home.

Risks associated with at home digital learning. Significant increases in time spent online increase the likelihood of encounters with bad actors. This is the case with child exploitation, according to an FBI warning issued in April 2020,⁵ and it is also true for risks of encountering extremist propaganda.

Reduced social supports from trusted adults. The network of teachers, coaches, and other instructors who can assist parents in spotting changes to a child's behavior are no longer able to do so.

Isolation from others who might challenge new beliefs. Social restrictions prevent children from accessing the peers and mentors who could discourage and refute emerging extremist attitudes. The sense of belonging to peer groups, sports teams, extracurricular activities and other social groups that provides important resilience to extremist recruitment may be weaker during this time of isolation in ways that create more susceptibility to extremist groups' promises of brotherhood, belonging and a sense of purpose.

Uncertainty and Loss. The COVID-19 era is a time of great uncertainty and loss. Almost every family in the United States will be touched by the loss of life from COVID-19. Young people have also lost their regular network of peer support, the rewards and milestones of the school year (sports, dances, graduation, etc.), and their daily routine and structure. COVID-19's impact on the economy is pushing caregivers into unemployment, promising an ongoing loss of financial stability for all who depend on them.

Scapegoating and simplistic answers. Extremist groups exploit tragedy and loss by pushing blame onto scapegoats who they claim are responsible for the virus and its broader impacts. Such groups thrive during times of uncertainty by offering simplistic answers and easy targets to blame.

Broadening support base. Some extremist groups are exploiting COVID-19 as a public relations opportunity, engaging in community service aimed at softening their public image as hate groups.

New extremist content circulating. Extremists have quickly seized on the virus to circulate videos, memes, and other materials that promote racist and xenophobic arguments and conspiracy theories about the virus' origin, its impact on minority communities, and the government's response.

Some of this material has circulated widely on mainstream social media channels, increasing the likelihood of encountering hateful or extremist content. This situation creates a "perfect storm" for individuals to explore extremist spaces and content online, as Online radicalization is helped by a lack of competing views or challenges to the ideologies people encounter online. Extremist groups thrive in situations such as these by exploiting legitimate fears and grievances while preying on vulnerable children and adolescents.

The good news is that parents and caregivers are the people in the best position to stop radicalization in its tracks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Guide provides strategies for parents and caregivers on how to recognize warning signs, how to get help, and how to engage a radicalized child or young adult:

LISTEN to what children are saying. If they begin to repeat themes or vocabulary associated with extremists and conspiracy theories, try not to ridicule or punish them. Ridicule and scolding have actually been shown to strengthen problematic belief systems.¹⁰ Instead, suggest that the people spreading these messages may have their own motives besides the truth and a child's well-being. Then, reach out for help from one of the resources provided at the end of this guide.

ASK QUESTIONS about what children are doing online, what they are learning, and what kinds of websites and platforms they spend time on. Approach these questions from a place of curiosity rather than monitoring. Ask open-ended questions, like "What values do you stand for?" or "What kind of person do you want to be?" Asking questions that show genuine interest in a child's activities and hobbies may open up new lines of communication and sharing about what they do online. Ask questions that let them teach you something from their lives, like "How does that game work?" or "How do you think your teachers could be doing better in the transition to online learning?" Teenagers may open up more if you raise questions during casual activities where they are not the only focus of your attention. Talking while driving in the car, folding laundry, or taking a walk can reduce the pressure.¹¹

DISCUSS the news with children in an age-appropriate way. Visit sites like the News Literacy Project to learn how you can avoid misinformation and propaganda. Screen content they are watching by looking at the reviews and parent/child ratings on Common Sense Media. Proactively suggest materials published by trustworthy news sources and read an article together each day. Subscribe and listen to a credible current events podcast together. Pay attention to the news sources children favor and ask them how they know the sources of their information are credible. Help direct them toward reliable news sources. Continue to educate yourself on how to identify misinformation and disinformation in the news and elsewhere.

EDUCATE children on the ways that propaganda and misinformation are used to manipulate people. Talk to them about both the styles and strategies of extremist propaganda (such as scapegoating or offering simple solutions to complex problems). Explain that propaganda can be delivered in any medium—writing, video, music, memes, etc.—and can often disguise itself as humor.

ADVISE children to practice good internet safety. They should be cautious about clicking on links they don't recognize and should not click on links sent from people they don't know. Maintaining privacy settings—and updating them regularly—on all apps and social media accounts is important.

ENCOURAGE your children to critically examine messages they receive, and to treat the information they consume as persuasive devices, meant to convince them of a world view. Talk about what they can do if they encounter an extremist message online or in real life (see "Responding to Hate," below). These critical thinking skills and vigilance can help a child spot and overcome radicalizing messages.

EXPOSE the way extremists prey on a young person's sense of vulnerability and identity. Demonstrate to children how these messages might even appeal to them. Be honest about a

time in the past when you may have been deceived by an individual or group who didn't have your best interests at heart. See the resources provided at the end of this guide to learn more about the experiences of former extremists and share them.

REMINDE children that people may not be who they say they are online. The internet allows anyone to wear a mask—especially predators. Sometimes, people who seem popular and successful are really failures. People who seem fun and accepting can be intolerant and even abusive. This is especially true in extremist spaces, where violence and exploitation within groups is quite common.

Promoting Digital and Media Literacy

The internet is an amazing tool for teaching and learning. But, before we can teach students to harness its power and become good citizens of the web, we need to understand the intricacies of how it works and how it can be manipulated to mislead and even harm users.

SPLCs Teaching Tolerance staff has developed its “Digital Literacy Framework⁷” in order to support educators, parents, and youth alike. Teaching Tolerance’s framework offers seven key areas in which students need support developing digital and civic literacy skills. The framework outlines the overarching knowledge and skills necessary while also detailing more granular examples of student behaviors to help educators evaluate mastery. Those seven areas are as follows:

1. Students can locate and verify reliable sources of information.
2. Students understand how digital information comes to them.
3. Students can constructively engage in digital communities.
4. Students understand how online communication affects privacy and security.
5. Students understand that they are producers of information.
6. Students understand their role as customers in an online marketplace.
7. Students can evaluate the value of the internet as a mechanism of civic action.

Teaching Tolerance’s framework also offers dozens of sample lessons for K-12 educators. Those lessons are tailored for age groups. Further resources for professional development and support around digital literacy are also available.

Reports and studies emerging from Finland evidence how impactful an empirically guided, well-structured program of digital and media literacy can be for inoculating a society to the harms of disinformation and misinformation, extremism and radicalization. The Guardian reported in January of this year that Finland “top[s], by some margin, an annual index measuring resistance to fake news in 35 European countries, adding that “the programme aims to ensure that everyone, from pupil to politician, can detect – and do their bit to fight – false information.”⁸ Finland demonstrates how civil society and government may play an ethical, cutting edge role in helping citizens safeguard their families and communities to such harms through education.

SPLC and PERIL also stress the importance of media and digital literacy in our *Building Resilience & Confronting Risk in the COVID-19 Era* guide for parents, caregivers, and educators.

⁷ <https://www.tolerance.org/frameworks/digital-literacy>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/fact-from-fiction-finlands-new-lessons-in-combating->

The Danish Aarhus Model: Prevention and De-radicalization

This strategy, developed and employed in Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark, is quite unique, involving both model programs for early detection and prevention and programs to help already radicalized individuals deescalate their involvement and exit from extremism.

The purpose of the program is to

stop or redirect the processes of violent radicalization. A main concern in this regard is to ensure constitutional rights and freedom of expression while at the same time acknowledging the democratic necessity of political and religious activities, and eventually, to guide the political and religious opinions, critiques and activities into legal modes of operation within the framework of democracy.⁹

The goal of the program is to channel youths and adults away from radical environments onto a different path. The Model requires close, interdisciplinary cooperation among existing educational and social welfare agencies identifying and working with vulnerable youth and then evidenced-based intervention and redirection. The Model depends on parents, teachers, peers and others recognizing early warning signs of extremism and then helping the individual find alternative ways to find answers to questions of interpersonal relations and life. An essential element of the Aarhus Model is training a cadre of mentors “with whom the mentee can discuss questions and challenges of daily life as well as the ultimate concerns of existential, political and religious questions of life.”¹⁰ Another essential element in the program is early prevention programs, to discuss the threats of terrorism and violent radicalization and to help peers and teachers recognize risk factors for possible radicalization.

The Model also includes an exit program designed to help individuals who want to leave extremism behind and return to daily social life. The program involves investment in community-based employment and education programs, as well as housing, therapy, and medical care. A similar exit support program in the United States, Life After Hate, has existed since 2011. Established by a group of former violent extremists, Life After Hate, provides support and guidance for individuals who want to leave a hate group and for their friends and family members. Using their own experiences with the trauma, abuse, alienation, and shame that could prompt an individual to join a hate group, the group employs evidence-based research in an effort to support “an exit strategy for men and women ready to leave hate behind once and for all.”¹¹

Stop Funding Online Hate

For decades, the SPLC has been fighting hate and exposing how hate groups use the internet. We have lobbied internet companies, one by one, to comply with their own rules to prohibit their services from being used to foster hate or discrimination. A key part of this strategy has been to target these organizations’ funding.

In January 2020, Lecia Brooks, the SPLC’s Chief of Staff, testified at hearings House Financial Services Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and Monetary Policy about how technology companies can disrupt the funding, organizing and recruiting efforts of hate groups on their platforms.¹²

⁹ Preben Bertelsen, *Danish Preventive Measures and De-radicalization Strategies: The Aarhus Model in From the Desert to World Cities: The New Terrorism*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2015

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://www.lifeafterhate.org>

¹² <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2020/01/15/splc-testifies-congress-financing-domestic-terrorism>

After outlining the nature and magnitude of the current threat posed by the white nationalist movement in the United States – unfortunately energized and emboldened by the words and actions of President Trump – her testimony focused on ways in which technology companies, including social media sites and online pay portals, can disrupt the funding, organizing and recruiting efforts of hate groups and bad actors who seek to normalize racism, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant ideologies as well as sexism and anti-LGBTQ animus.

A few highlights from SPLC’s testimony:

- hate group sites are funded by peer-to-peer interaction, not by large donors. Even a small amount of money can go a long way in spreading hate online. These groups and individuals are able to spread their toxic ideologies far and wide through ads and events that cost relatively little.
- Tech companies should create policies and terms of service to ensure that social media platforms, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not provide platforms where hateful activities and extremism can grow and lead to domestic terrorism.
- Removing hate groups from online platforms by removing their funding sources will prevent their ideas from reaching a wider audience and disrupt their networks. To stem the rise of hate and domestic terrorism, we are encouraging tech companies to respect people over profits.
- Hate groups have clearly been damaged by the efforts of the SPLC and its allied organizations, but many extremists are finding new, though often obscure, internet platforms along with technology providers that don’t mind providing them with services.
- Charities and donor-advised funds also have a role to play in fighting hate online by blocking donations to hate groups. Charitable gift funds – including the largest charity in the United States – are helping dozens of hate groups raise millions of dollars by allowing their donors not to reveal their identities.

Change the Terms

On Oct. 25, 2018, the Change the Terms¹³ coalition – including the SPLC and a coalition of more than three dozen civil rights, human rights, technology policy, and consumer protection organizations released a suite of recommended policies for technology companies that would take away the online microphone that hate groups use to recruit members, raise funds and organize violence.¹⁴ Because these tech platforms are largely owned and managed by the private sector, not the government, we believe these corporations must be part of the solution to address the promulgation of hateful activities online. Our coalition hopes the model policies provide a baseline from which to measure progress tech companies are making, as well as a benchmark for newer companies wrestling with some of these issues for the first time.

In response to Change the Terms’ advocacy, several Silicon Valley leaders have made promising changes¹⁵ that align with the coalition’s vision for a safer online world. In March

¹³ <https://www.changetheterms.org/>

¹⁴ Change the Terms, *Recommended Internet Company Corporate Policies and Terms of Service to Reduce Hateful Activities* https://assets.website-files.com/5bba6f4828dfc3686095bf6b/5bd0e36186e28d35874f0909_Recommended%20Internet%20Company%20Corporate%20Policies%20%20Terms%20of%20Service_final-10-24.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.freepress.net/our-response/expert-analysis/explainers/change-terms-year-fighting-online-hate>

2019, Facebook banned¹⁶ prominent white supremacists, published a report¹⁷ on content removal and made changes to its Livestream feature while also accepting the coalition's recommendations on tracking URLs from extremist sites.

In August 2019, Internet-infrastructure firm Cloudflare cut its service to 8chan,¹⁸ an infamous online forum. The move came nearly two days after the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas, in which the alleged gunman posted an anti-Latinx manifesto on 8chan 20 minutes before murdering 22 people.

In June 2019, YouTube announced a broadened hate speech policy,¹⁹ in which “content that alleges a group is superior in order to justify discrimination on characteristics like age, race, caste, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status” would be prohibited.

Improve Hate Crime Training and Data Collection.

Data drives policy. We cannot address a problem if we are not effectively tracking and measuring it. The FBI has been tracking hate crimes and preparing an annual report on reports they receive from state and local law enforcement officials under the federal Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) since 1991. Like all FBI crime reporting, it is voluntary – and it is clearly incomplete. In 2018, the most current data are available, more than 1,500 federal and local police agencies *did not report any data to the FBI* – including eight cities with populations of more than 100,000. Another 77 cities with populations of more than 100,000 affirmatively reported zero (0) hate crimes to the FBI, a statistic that strains credibility. The FBI is scheduled to release their 2019 HCSA today.

At the federal level, because of the special impact of hate violence on communities, SPLC and a broad coalition of civil rights, religious, education, and civic groups are urging the incoming Biden Administration and Congress to make hate crime reporting mandatory. While working to make reporting mandatory, however, Congress should pass the **Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act**, which would authorize grants to promote hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives – and to develop state hate crime reporting hotlines to refer individuals to local law enforcement and support services.

Promote Anti-Bias Education Programs that Help Steer Individuals Away from Hate and Extremism.

The law is a blunt instrument to confront hate and extremism; it is much better to prevent these criminal acts in the first place. Since it is not possible to legislate, regulate, or tabulate racism or hatred out of existence, we need federal and state government leadership to promote anti-bias, anti-hate, and democracy-building education programs – such as SPLC's Teaching Tolerance resources – in our nation's schools. Especially in these divided and polarized times, every elementary and secondary school should promote an inclusive school climate and activities that celebrate our nation's diversity.

It is disappointing that the City Council did not renew funding for the Hate Violence Prevention Initiative (HVPI) as part of the FY 21 budget. HVPI had partnered with community-based organizations that direct services to vulnerable, targeted populations – building trust,

¹⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/27/business/facebook-white-nationalist-supremacist.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/15/technology/facebook-removal-posts-fake-accounts.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.wired.com/story/cloudflare-8chan-support-ddos/>

¹⁹ <https://blog.youtube/news-and-events/our-ongoing-work-to-tackle-hate>

educating about rights and access to victim services, and encouraging communities to report incidents of hate violence to law enforcement authorities. The City Council should renew funding for this important program.

Speak out against hate.

Finally, words matter. It is impossible to overstate the importance of civic and military leaders using their public platforms and bully pulpits to condemn hate and extremism. Failure to do so emboldens extremists. In words and deed, President Trump and his administration have fallen far short of what we have come to expect – what the nation actually needs – from our leaders. In fact, the President’s divisive, polarizing rhetoric and executive actions have, too frequently, made things worse, elevating the urgent need for Governors, Mayors, police executives, and federal, state, and local legislators to speak out against hate and extremist acts