



May 14, 2019

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Chair
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil
Liberties
412 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chip Roy
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil
Liberties
1319 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Statement for the record of the Subcommittee's hearing, "Confronting White Supremacy (Part I): The Consequences of Inaction"

Dear Chairman Raskin and Ranking Member Roy:

As the Washington Director of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, I write to commend the fact that you are holding this hearing on white supremacy. While supremacy has long and shameful place in the history of the United States. Its current manifestation in the White Nationalist movement poses a grave threat to the safety of individuals, communities, and the fabric of democracy itself. Bend the Arc is particularly concerned by the ways in which harmful and dangerous rhetoric and policies on the national stage have emboldened this movement.

In the weeks before the massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, political leaders, as well as press outlets, stoked fear through their warnings about a so-called "invasion" of refugees seeking asylum at our borders. Many added conspiracy theories about powerful Jewish financiers funding this supposed invasion. The murderer in Pittsburgh pointed to those very news reports and conspiracy theories as his motivation. That is why members of the Jewish community in Pittsburgh called on the President to fully denounce white nationalism, stop targeting and endangering all minorities, cease the assault on immigrants and refugees, and make a commitment to compassionate, democratic policies that recognize the dignity of everyone. More than 86,000 Americans [joined that call](#), which was met with silence. Less than six months later, following the horrific white supremacist murders of 50 Muslim worshipers in New Zealand, and the violent attack on the Poway Chabad exactly six months later, the President continues to dismiss the notion that white nationalism is a rising threat.

Our colleagues at Political Research Associates (PRA) have detailed in their extensive report, ["Advancing Immigrant, Muslim, and Refugee Justice in a Period of Ascendant White Nationalism"](#) (2018), that it is not only the Trump administration's rhetoric and refusal to unequivocally condemn white nationalism that is problematic, but his actual xenophobic policies have emboldened the most openly racist elements of our society and pose grave danger to immigrants and people of color. PRA conducted 64 interviews between November 2017 and March 2018 and when asked about current threats to immigrant, refugee, and Muslim

communities, organizers and advocates identified the federal government, in the form of immigration policy, surveillance, and law enforcement, as the single biggest threat.

Violence does not just take the form of mass shootings and vigilante murders, it is also family separation, and refugee bans. It is not just racist slurs about Mexicans and Muslims, it is the misuse of executive power and the declaration of a national emergency. Social movements on the extreme right are energized by such policies and such words, some of them moved to violence, others mobilized to pull the country--through policies and through politics--ever more in the direction of bigotry, mistrust, and polarization.

Finally, I respectfully include below three articles which further detail Bend the Arc's concerns with the mainstreaming of such hate in our society, and its dangers, as seen through particular moments of violence in the last few years:

- *White nationalism can't be 'normalized' if we want to stop massacres*, which I authored;
- *When white nationalism goes mainstream: After Charlottesville, are right-wing groups on the rise?* by Stosh Cotler, CEO of Bend the Arc Jewish Action; and
- *Charleston to Tree of Life: White nationalism is a threat to us all* by Reverend Jennifer Bailey, executive director of Faith Matters Network, and co-founder of the People's Supper, and Dove Kent, Senior Strategy Officer at Bend the Arc Jewish Action.

Additionally, appended you'll find for the record, PRA's timeline of far-right mobilization in 2018.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Kimelman-Block". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jason" being the most prominent.

Rabbi Jason Kimelman-Block
Director, Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

The Hill; May 1st, 2019

White nationalism can't be 'normalized' if we want to stop massacres

By Rabbi Jason Kimelman-Block

The Jewish community in America ended Passover with broken hearts, mourning the loss of Lori Gilbert-Kaye, who was murdered protecting her rabbi during the horrific shooting at the Chabad of Poway, near San Diego, and the wounding of three other worshippers. Exactly six months after the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, once again we are collectively experiencing the pain of anti-Semitic terror in our houses of prayer. And we are more resolved than ever to respond in unity, in love, in action.

Unfortunately, the attack in Poway is far from an isolated incident. It is part of a rise in white nationalist violence that threatens all manner of communities and places of worship in the United States and around the world, from synagogues to mosques to Sikh temples to black churches. Some of these incidents we know well: Pittsburgh, the Christchurch mosque shootings, the suspected arson of three black churches in Louisiana. All are flashpoints in a larger story.

The Anti-Defamation League reported a surge of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in 2017, a 60 percent increase from the year before. Research from New America documents a similar increase in incidents targeting the Muslim American community. And the Southern Poverty Law Center reports a 50 percent increase in white nationalist groups from 2017-2018, with 81 people murdered by individuals influenced by the alt-right in the past five years.

Why do white nationalists target our communities in this way? At its heart, their violence stems from the false belief that the growing population of immigrants, people of color, and Muslims in America will threaten a white majority, instead of strengthening our democracy and fulfilling our country's promise. And they blame Jewish people for the societal changes they fear, relying on old anti-Semitic tropes and conspiracy theories. Lately, these conspiracy theories have found an audience online, amplified by some elected leaders.

It's notable that the Poway shooter also claimed credit for a recent arson at a mosque in Escondido. Despite efforts to divide Muslim and Jewish Americans from each other, these attacks demonstrate that violence targeting one of our communities is part of a hatred directed at all of our communities.

The key question in this moment is how to stop the spread of this deadly movement. How many more people must die at the hands of followers of this toxic ideology before we as a society resolve to take concrete action?

This is a crisis that requires action on multiple fronts. Technology companies must take responsibility for the hate that is spread through their platforms. Law enforcement agencies must take these threats seriously and prioritize the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of white nationalist violence. This moment demands a serious response from our elected leaders at all levels, and from both political parties. We cannot discuss the rapid rise of white nationalism in our society without talking about the way that its ideas and policies has become mainstreamed in American politics, while the threats from this movement are obfuscated or ignored.

When the House Judiciary committee held hearings on white nationalism and the rise of hate crimes several weeks ago, expert witnesses testified on the growing threat of this movement and laid out concrete suggestions of what can be done to better track and counter these hate groups. However, Republican members of the committee called on two witnesses who could not have been less qualified for the task; one denigrated Muslims and one dismissed any focus on white nationalism as an "election strategy" and fear-mongering by the Democratic Party. And in the hours following the shooting in Poway, we heard prominent voices ignoring the explicit white nationalist motives of the shooter to redirect blame elsewhere. People and elected leaders who engage in this obfuscation and redirection aren't just wrong; they contribute to the atmosphere of hatred.

All of us deserve to be safe. We cannot, and will not, accept an America where massacres in synagogues, churches, temples or mosques become normal. We will never stop rising up

together to fight for our collective safety. From our grief over the tragedy in Poway, we will build solidarity within our Jewish community, and with our allies, to defeat white nationalism and advance a vision of a multiracial democracy where all of us can live, love and thrive.

Rabbi Jason Kimelman-Block is the Washington director of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, a movement of progressive Jews. He previously served as the director of the PANIM Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values.

Salon; August 11, 2018

When white nationalism goes mainstream: After Charlottesville, are right-wing groups on the rise?

As white nationalists rally in D.C. this weekend, one year after Charlottesville, it feels uncomfortably familiar

Stosh Cotler

It's worth remembering that a year ago, it was actually shocking to witness a brazen display of white supremacy in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia. Hundreds of mostly white men with torches marching in the night and chanting "Jews will not replace us." Even more heinous was the open assault on people of color, and the white supremacist who plowed his car into a crowd of peaceful protesters, killing Heather Heyer.

A year later, the events in Charlottesville seem less shocking and more like the inevitable, unavoidable effects of white nationalism's ascendance via the embrace of a president and a major political party. If the torches in Charlottesville illuminated anything beyond their owners' contempt, it was that white supremacy was no longer on the fringes; it had gone mainstream in the form of white nationalism.

To Jewish Americans, all of this feels uncomfortably familiar. The violent ideology of white nationalism, of which antisemitism is an inseparable component, is part of both our modern-day experience and our historical memory. And one year after Charlottesville, we are speaking up yet again because of what we are witnessing under the Trump administration: the hateful philosophy of the Charlottesville protestors translated into government policy with the goal of targeting other vulnerable groups.

Take the Trump administration's policy toward immigrants. In recent months, we have seen cruel deportations of parents who've been in the country for decades, the separation of thousands of children from their parents at points of entry, and reports about new efforts to roll back the citizenship of naturalized Americans. The impact of these policies is not to clearly reduce crime or to improve public safety (as the Trump administration would have us believe),

but to undermine America's flourishing diversity. This is what white supremacy looks like when implemented through policy and enforced by government agencies.

Or look at the administration's posture towards Muslims. The President's implementation of the Muslim ban, his statement that "Islam hates us," his fear mongering about foreign terrorism while homegrown, white nationalist domestic terrorism goes unacknowledged (and its study underfunded), are all taken from the playbook of white supremacy.

Trump's embrace of white nationalism is also reflected in the company he keeps. His administration is, and always has been, staffed with unrepentant white nationalists, not only with the prominence of figures like Jeff Sessions, Stephen Miller, Sebastian Gorka and Steve Bannon, but throughout government, like former National Security Council staffer Michael Anton and Thayer Verschoor, a staffer at the Department of Veterans Affairs with a history of anti-Muslim extremism.

Nearly every action or statement this president puts forward, from his attacks on black sports icons to his administration's attempts to roll back voting rights, are intended to further advance the dominance of a white, Christian politics and culture in American society while subjugating all other groups.

The decision by white supremacists to regroup a year later at the White House isn't just revealing of how these extremists see its current occupant as a fellow traveler. It's a sign of their desire to further normalize their beliefs and bring them even deeper into the political fold. It's a celebration that people who share much of their worldview are in power. Through his radical agenda, through his destructive and violent rhetoric, Trump is fulfilling the vision of white nationalism and championing their worldview of bigotry and hatred. It's no coincidence that a record number of white nationalists are openly running for public office in 2018 (and one such candidate may speak at the rally in D.C.).

When these right-wing groups rally in D.C. this weekend, we can expect to see a round of denials and denouncements from the White House and from Republicans. But the sympathies and

worldview of this administration and its political party are clear, and we know that the white supremacists themselves will see these denouncements as the winks they are, while policies that further their desires continue unabated.

Although the Trump administration has not singled out Jews as a target of its agenda, antisemitism is undoubtedly a central tenet of white nationalism. White nationalists view Jews as the "puppet-masters" pulling the strings behind efforts to create a more diverse and equitable society and push back against white supremacy. Eric Ward, civil rights strategist and executive director of Western States Center, explains that these extremists view Jews as the "arch-nemesis of the White race, whose machinations have prevented the natural and inevitable imposition of white supremacy." Anti-semitism is so core to their ideology that the organizers of the rally in D.C. are discussing ways they can "normalize" it, to make it less overt and more appealing to a wider audience.

A year after Charlottesville, it's on all people of conscience to better know what we're up against, to better understand what underlies and animates the bigotry of white nationalists and recognize how pervasive their ideas have become. The good news is it's not too late to act: we have an opportunity to defeat white nationalism and its elected enablers at the polls this fall.

Only by better understanding this threat can we overcome it, and we can if we get to work now.

Stosh Cotler is the CEO of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action

Salon; October 31, 2018

Charleston to Tree of Life: White nationalism is a threat to us all

Spaces of worship are sadly most vulnerable to white nationalist violence

Reverend Jennifer Bailey • Dove Kent

This weekend we witnessed a sacred place desecrated by violence as 11 people were shot dead at Tree of Life Congregation, the third-oldest synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Many of us had flashbacks to June 17, 2015, when the nation watched in horror as nine black parishioners and clergy were brutally murdered during a weekly bible study at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. While separated by over 650 miles, the connection between these incidents is clear. Both were perpetrated by white men infected with the disease of a white supremacist ideology and emboldened by white nationalist propaganda.

There is nothing new about this violence. As a Jewish racial justice organizer living in the South and as a clergywoman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church married to a Jewish man, we both know all too well the intimate linkages between anti-black racism and anti-Semitism. Both share common patterns of otherization, systemic isolation, and never-ending threats of physical violence. The distinction is that unlike anti-black racism, which requires a fixed hierarchy or binary system of values — i.e., Whites are supreme, Blacks are on the bottom — anti-Semitism is often described as cyclical. The Jewish experience has been characterized by periods of stability and safety, only to be countered by periods of intense anti-Jewish violence and oppression. For Jews of Color, navigating these terrifying realities is a fact of their daily lives.

For decades, white nationalists have blamed Jews for black and brown communities causing unrest in white Christian societies. The most recent manifestations of this perverse legacy are conspiracy theories about billionaire philanthropist George Soros and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society that assert that Jews are responsible for bringing immigrants into the country, endangering white Christian lives. There are real-life consequences to these concepts entering the public lexicon. According to the Anti-Defamation League, hate crimes against Jews in the United States increased by 60 percent in 2017. These trends are not unique to the United States.

White nationalist myths about George Soros and Jewish responsibility for the global migrant crisis travel throughout Europe, where anti-Semitism is also on the rise in Europe.

It would be easy to attempt to isolate the tragedy at Tree of Life Congregation to the actions of one madman. Yet just this past week a white man in Jeffersontown, Kentucky, killed two black people at a Kroger grocery store after trying and failing to enter a predominantly black church nearby minutes before the fatal shooting. Sacred spaces of worship have historically been the places our communities are most resilient and also most visible and vulnerable. They have been sites of resistance for pushing back against injustice. It is no wonder then that our sanctuaries are targets for white nationalist violence.

Just as the actions of Mother Emanuel shooter Dylann Roof were fomented by public rhetoric fanning the flames of white racial resentment and anti-blackness, so too was the loss of 11 souls during Shabbat services this week the result of widespread anti-Semitic ideology stoked by politicians and leaders. To be sure, anti-Semitism and anti-black racism have been around for centuries. But the white nationalist movement has been emboldened by President Trump's dog-whistles and outright blaming of Jewish philanthropists for social unrest, the Republican leadership's echoing of those tropes and their blatant anti-Semitic messages, and by right-wing leaders in Eastern Europe. All this has escalated the violence to levels not seen since the first half of the 20th century — a time, it should be noted, characterized by the genocide of over 6 million Jews and an epidemic of racial terror lynchings across the American South.

Today white nationalism is fueling and escalating anti-Semitism and violent anti-blackness. The massacres at Mother Emanuel and Tree of Life are white nationalism taken to its desired ends: the elimination of otherness by any means necessary. The Trump campaign, Trump administration and Republican congressional leadership have been peddling white nationalism for years now.

They have peddled white nationalism explicitly through appeals to anti-Semitic rhetoric and implicitly through their silence and complicity. For this is what happens when this violent

ideology courses through our country, unchecked. All our communities are put at risk, often with deadly consequences.

Reverend Jennifer Bailey is a clergywoman in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the executive director of Faith Matters Network, and co-founder of the People's Supper.

Dove Kent is Senior Strategy Officer at Bend the Arc Jewish Action.