



COUNCIL AGAINST HATE



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Alison Lebovitz, *Co-Chair*

Wade Hinton, *Co-Chair*

Korede Ajumobi

Juan Antonio Alonso

Samantha Boucher

Marsha Drake

David Eichenthal

Moses Freeman

Brandon Gilvin

Yusuf Hakeem

Susan Harris

Bassam Issa

Deborah Levine

Paul McDaniel

Marcus McKamey

James McKissic

Karen McReynolds

Angie Santamaria

David Steele

Susan Tandler

Danna Vaughn

The Mayor's Council Against Hat would like to thank the Anti-Defamation League, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Family Justice Center for their support in the creation of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At his 2018 State of the City address, Mayor Andy Berke announced the formation of a new Council Against Hate.



"The FBI recently released a report showing hate crimes are up nationally. Our state ranks ninth in total number of hate crimes in the US.... A city of creators will find new ways to combat hatred, especially when it leads to violence and tears apart the social fabric of our community. After July 16, 2015, our city was held up as a model of how to respond to terrorism. We can also be a model of how to stop the hate that inspires it in the first place."

Local community leaders Alison Lebovitz and Wade Hinton were tapped by Mayor Berke to chair the Council. A diverse steering committee was empaneled and met for the first time on October 18, 2018.

Within ten days of this steering committee meeting, headlines were dominated by events demonstrating exactly how critical this work is.

More than a dozen pipe bombs were delivered to media organizations and politicians around the country. Two African-Americans were gunned down in a racially-motivated attack inside a Louisville grocery store. The deadliest anti-Semitic attack in our nation's history occurred when 11 individuals were killed at a Pittsburgh synagogue. Only a few months later, fifty Muslim individuals were killed in New Zealand by an attacker who claims to have been radicalized, at least in part, by American white supremacist organizations he found online.

These acts follow a troubling arc of increasing amounts of hate speech and ethno-nationalist extremism. According to CNN in November 2017: *"Hate crimes in the United States have increased to a point not seen in recent history, according to a new statistical report released Monday by the Federal Bureau of Investigation... 6,121 [hate crimes] were reported to the FBI in 2016... That's up from 5,850 reported hate crime incidents in 2015."*

Tennessee's cities -- and Chattanooga in particular -- occupy an uncomfortable leadership position among communities that are grappling with these incidents. In 2015, the FBI issued a research report that ranked the Volunteer State as "9th in the nation among participating states in the total number of hate crime offenses," according to a story by Nashville's Fox 17 News:

"Chattanooga and Clarksville had the most-reported number of hate crime incidents recorded for bias based on race, ethnicity or ancestry with ten reports each. Chattanooga also ranked highest with six reported incidents based on religious bias as a motivation."



The rise in hate crimes correlates with an escalation in hateful speech online. As Slate.com pointed out that year: "News outlets and social media accounts have swelled with reports of swastikas at schools, racist taunts, and other hate-fueled attacks and acts of intimidation. The Southern Poverty Law Center... catalogued 1,064 such incidents, 13 of which were later debunked as false reports..."

This report proposes a framework and several initial recommendations for how the Council Against Hate may begin to limit the negative impact of hate in Chattanooga. These ideas were informed by reviewing current research about hate crimes and violent extremism in America – particularly in the South – and discussions with various constituencies within our community – African-American, Latinx, Muslim, Jewish, LGBTQ+, and others who are frequently and increasingly targets of harassment, intimidation, and violence.

Critical to this work is an understanding of what the ADL calls “*the pyramid of hate*,” in which communities permit and gradually normalize incidents of bias until they result in violent acts or even genocide.

Addressing this kind of behavior at the base of the pyramid should prevent our community from experiencing the dangerous and horrific acts that occur at its apex.



The Council Against Hate draws inspiration and support from numerous allied partners and efforts across the country and around the world, including Communities Against Extremism, Strong Cities Network, and others. We are proud to stand with our partners in law enforcement, the faith community, the media, institutions of higher learning, the corporate community, and county, state, and federal governments in defense of our values.

MISSION

The mission of the Mayor's Council Against Hate is to understand the factors leading to the spread of violent extremism and intolerance in Chattanooga and to advise the public and private sectors on policies and strategies that will create a more civil, safe, and welcoming community for all people.



Artist's rendering of "Wreath of Honor," the City of Chattanooga's memorial to the Fallen Five. Source: Re:Site Studio

VISION

The vision of the Mayor's Council Against Hate is for the greater Chattanooga area to be known as the most civil, safe, and welcoming community in the country that honors freedom of expression, protects marginalized populations, and regards the diversity of faiths, ethnicities, genders, and viewpoints as an essential strength.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Hate and violent extremism have no single cause, and will not be solved by a single approach, sector, or individual. The theory of change grounding the Council's work seeks to invest time, energy, and capacity in critical areas to create system-level change.

To achieve the outcomes we seek, we must:

- Create a coherent and consistent legal framework to deter hate crimes through enforced penalties.
- Engage influencers in the business community, faith community, media, and others to set cultural expectations around shared values.
- Drive generational change from the bottom-up by educating young people about consequences of bias, discrimination, and hateful behavior to reduce incidents and positively influence adults' rhetoric and behavior.

VALUES

The Mayor and the steering committee made the decision that the Council's work would be rooted in education, empowerment, and impact-focused approaches.

- **EDUCATION.** Our work will be grounded in a base of shared facts, empirical data, and reliable reporting from media, public-sector institutions, and research entities.
- **EMPOWERMENT.** Our work will prompt action within personal networks and constituencies and encourage people to find new ways to make their values visible in our community.
- **IMPACT FOCUSED.** Our work will be considered successful only to the degree that people in our community – particularly marginalized and minority populations – feel safer.

STRATEGY 1:

Work to create public policies to protect targeted constituencies from hate crimes and violent extremism.

State laws regarding how hate crimes are defined and prosecuted vary from state to state. While Tennessee already has a hate crime statute in its code, we must advocate for law enforcement agencies and courts to have the most robust framework possible to pursue criminal penalties against those who commit hate crimes.

Recommendations:

Survey state statutes regarding hate crimes and determine which are the most effective, based on public input and available public safety data. Use this research as the basis for future state and local advocacy efforts to improve existing hate crime legislation.

Support and expand community immersion, cultural competency training, and diversity recruitment efforts by Chattanooga Police Department.

STRATEGY 2: Define and understand the problem of hate in our community.

Our ability to respond to incidents of bias, discrimination, and hate and mitigate against the damage they cause is hampered by our limited understanding of how often these incidents occur. Reporting to law enforcement agencies is inconsistent and incomplete, and in many cases, citizens may be uncertain as to what actually constitutes a reportable offense.

Recommendations:

Conduct a professional community-wide survey about incidents of bias and discrimination, and make the results publicly available.

Advocate for local, state, and federal policies to ensure more thorough and consistent reporting -- and public disclosure -- of these incidents.

Create methods encouraging citizens to report incidents of bias, discrimination, or extremist activity, such as a smartphone app that permits anonymous, geo-specific reporting.

STRATEGY 3:

Engage young people in combating hate.

Shifting the behaviors and attitudes regarding hate among adults will be effectively accomplished, at least in part, by educating our community's children about the dangers of hate and violent extremism and empowering them to speak out against them. As we have seen with mass movements like increasing seat-belt usage and reducing smoking, when children model our values, positive behavioral outcomes in society are possible.

Recommendations:

Challenge every student in Hamilton County's public schools to sign a pledge in which they commit to living a life free of hate. Using "signing ceremonies" as public engagement opportunities to speak to them about the importance of kindness, civility, and compassion.

Develop a committee within the Mayor's Youth Council focused on combating hate speech among high schoolers through the formation of harmony clubs, sponsoring "walk in my shoes" activities, or creating other ways to interact with kids of other cultures.

STRATEGY 4:
Prepare educators and other school staff to identify, respond to, and work against hate speech and extremist behavior.

While we focus on educating and empowering young people, we should also focus on making sure educators have the skills and resources to determine when incidents of discrimination and bias are occurring in their classrooms and how to take appropriate actions to stop it.

Recommendations:

Engage partners and appropriate third-party resources to provide training to local educators -- at no cost to them -- about trends in hate speech and hateful behavior among children, how to appropriately respond when confronted with incidents, and how to effectively build cultures of civility, kindness, and compassion within their classrooms. Set a goal of training every public school educator in Hamilton County within one year.

STRATEGY 5:

Engage the private sector and business community.

Challenging our most prominent corporate citizens to analyze how incidents of bias and discrimination manifest themselves in the workplace -- and the steps they can take when they do -- will add additional legitimacy and momentum to this conversation among local media and political influencers.

Recommendations:

Survey major employers about incidents of bias and discrimination in their workplaces and extant policies or procedures they may have in place to address them.

Survey workers about workplace attitudes, cultures, and incidents of bias.

Host roundtable discussions or other public events to share the findings of this research and determine possible new best practices.

Ask for formal commitments by CEOs and other high-level decision makers to create workplaces free from hate.

STRATEGY 6: Improve the community's media literacy -- including social media -- around hate speech and radicalization.

Research indicates that false content promulgated on social media travels much farther and faster than objectively factual content. Social media posts that are political in nature, especially when they are especially salacious or personal, can create partisan echo chambers in which discriminatory language and hateful behavior can become normalized. At the same time, shifting business models among traditional print and broadcast outlets are drawing many publishers and editors into increasingly subjective and partisan reporting behavior.

Recommendations:

Produce a series of public workshops and symposia on journalistic bias, first amendment concerns, contemporary media business models, cyber-bullying and the prevalence of hate speech in social media, and what the public can do to become more critical and informed news consumers.

Organize and train a "rapid response" committee of Council Against Hate members to respond online or in-person to hate speech activities.

STRATEGY 7: Create additional cultural programming.

Chattanooga is a city of creators. Creating experiences that intentionally and strategically foster interactions between people that would not otherwise interact will dissolve stereotypes and form social bonds that reduce fear and animosity between groups of varied ethnic, racial, religious, and sexual identities.

Recommendation:

Curate a program of film screenings, art exhibits, and/or “Pecha Kucha” talks that highlight stories and voices of those affected by hate speech, hate crimes, and discrimination. Produce a series of dinners or other experience opportunities at which multicultural and multiethnic guests can gather and discuss sensitive issues in a safe and non-political environment.

STRATEGY 8: Formalize the structure of the Council Against Hate.

While the steering committee has been critical to forming the initial goals and recommendations of the Council Against Hate, this group's work will only be successful and sustainable to the degree that the entire community chooses to get involved. This can be achieved by implementing a membership structure that balances formality with fluidity and encourages members to organize around projects that align with the Council's mission.

Recommendations:

Set and publicize a schedule of upcoming meetings. Invite the participation of the general public. A general membership meeting once per quarter, with ad hoc committee and working groups meetings as needed, is recommended.

Create a website that can serve as a comprehensive online clearinghouse of information about the Council, including updates on ongoing projects, meeting dates and times, and a reading list of current articles and reports about hate speech, hate crimes, and violent extremism.

CONCLUSION

The observations and recommendations in this report are intended to further a conversation about a crisis that is global in scale but highly localized in the damage – to lives, livelihoods, property, and civic health – that it does. Only when people feel adequately empowered to confront hate in their own communities and respond with peace, civility, and honesty, can we begin to reverse the crisis of hate and repair the destruction it has caused. The activities and programs proposed here are first steps to achieving that kind of community empowerment.

As Bruce Katz and Jeremy Novak state in their 2018 book, *The New Localism*:

“Those closest to the problems will always be best positioned to address them. Power is shifting in the world: downward from national governments and states to cities and metropolitan communities... Power now belongs to the problem solvers.”

We feel that this may be uniquely true with regard to hate speech, hate crimes, and violent extremism.



Hate in our community must, can, and will end. Cities like Chattanooga and the people who are invested in its future must take the lead.

~~HATE~~

