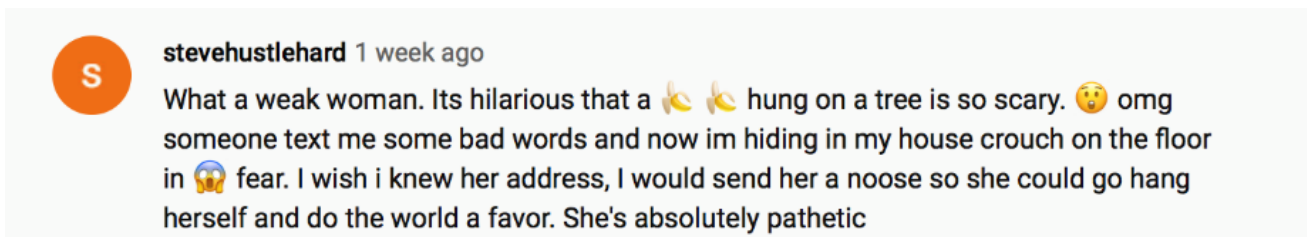


**Written Statement**  
**House Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce**  
**Hearing on “Mainstreaming Extremism: Social Media’s Role in Radicalizing America”**  
**Taylor A. Dumpson, Hate Crime Survivor, Cyber-Harassment Target, & Anti-Racist Activist**  
**September 24, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide insight on the role social media companies have played, and continue to play, in radicalizing America. Unfortunately, I know firsthand that online hate ruins lives by stoking fear, silencing voices, and causing harm to people’s physical and professional safety—all of which have a serious and lasting effect on victims and their families. And just because it happens digitally doesn’t mean it should be taken less seriously. Hate should never be normalized.



*Above: pictures of bananas hung from nooses on American University’s campus on May 1, 2017 (the day after Taylor Dumpson was sworn in as Student Government President), labeled “HARABE BAIT” and “AKA FREE.”*



*Above: posted on YouTube in October 2019.*

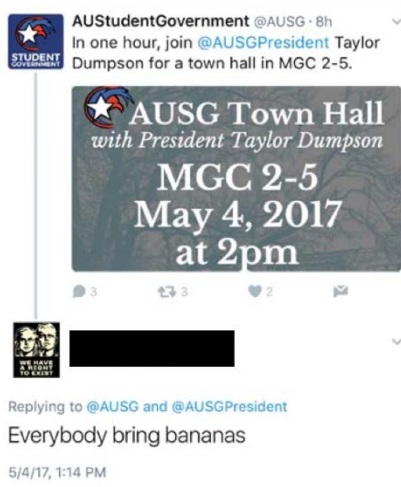
“N\*gger Agitator,” “Negress,” and “Sheboon” were just a few of the words used by Andrew Anglin—known white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and co-organizer of Charlottesville’s Unite the Right Rally—to describe me after I became the first Black woman to hold the position of Student Government President at American University in May 2017.

On May 1, 2017—the day after I was sworn in as President—a masked perpetrator hung bananas from black corded nooses from light posts and bus stops around campus. The bananas were labeled with “AKA” and “AKA FREE,” referencing Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA) the predominately Black sorority of which I am a member, and “HARAMBE BAIT” referencing the gorilla that was killed at the Cincinnati Zoo in 2016. As this vile act gained national attention and was investigated by the Department of Justice as a hate crime, my story must have come to Andrew Anglin’s attention.

By May 4, 2017, Anglin took it upon himself to incite a coordinated cyber-harassment campaign to encourage his followers to “send me some words of support” by doxing me. In other words, Anglin and many in his army of followers posted my personal information online with the intent that the information be used to harass, stalk, and threaten me, and be used against me for an unlawful purpose.

He and others provided their followers with the direct link to my Facebook page and Twitter page with calls to action. Due to his notoriety amongst the white supremacist community, Anglin’s followers heeded his call to action and began to inundate my social media accounts, chatrooms, and the dark-net with racist and sexist threats and comments. This “troll storm” was unrelenting and went on for months. This took place on various social media platforms, websites, and chatrooms. In essence, any time my name or story was—or is—mentioned, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and their sympathizers leave comments voicing their discontent, hate, and thinly veiled threats.

What I experienced following the May 1st hate crime was not “just some mean words from some mean people,” but was a part of a larger coordinated effort incited by a world-renowned neo-Nazi leader to intimidate, threaten, and harass me online. I was scared for my physical safety as bananas were already hung from nooses on my campus and was afraid that the white supremacists and neo-Nazis would act on their statements. I did not know what acts of violence *Daily Stormer* users were capable of doing, but I knew that this troll storm was not the first time that its users acted offline on their threats espoused online. There are reports that Dylann Roof posted on the *Daily Stormer*’s website prior to committing the Emanuel AME Church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina. I was incredibly frightened to know the same website was targeting me.

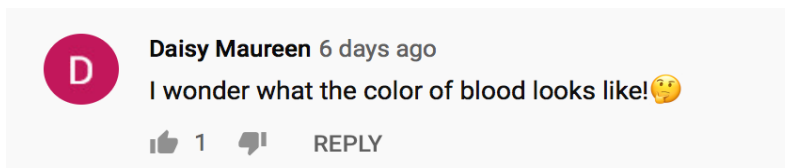


Above: posted on Twitter on May 4, 2017 by a Daily Stormer user.

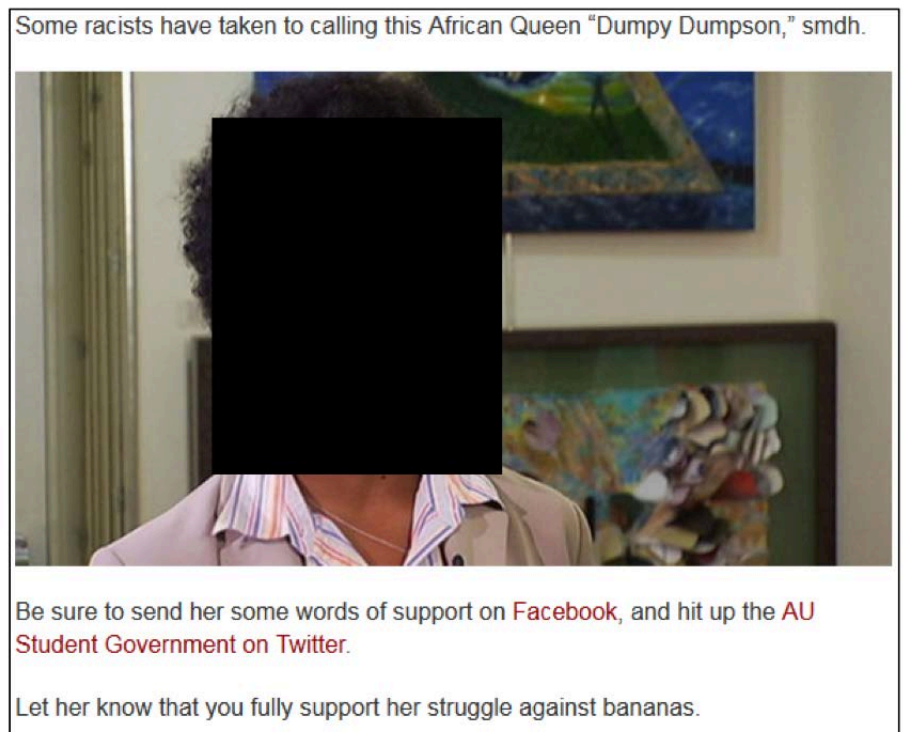
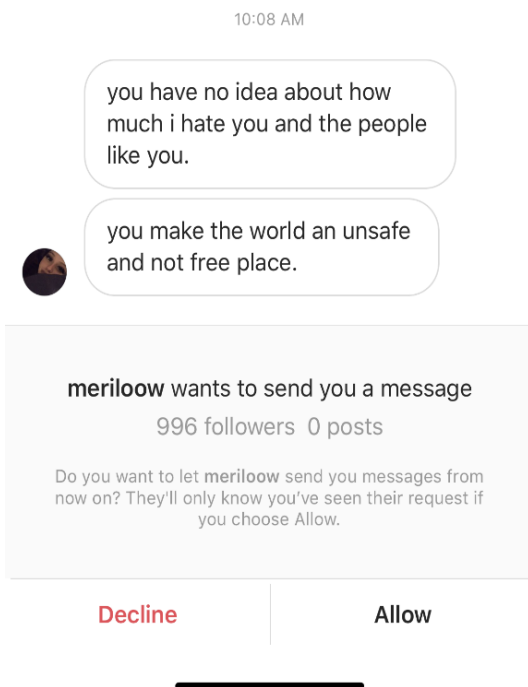
As a result of this experience, I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and lost 15 percent of my body weight. Still today, more than three years later, I experience flashbacks and triggers, and am forced to take increased measures to protect myself and my family. The online hate and harassment forced me to change my daily routine, install video cameras at my house, drastically decrease my social media use, stop tagging my location in posts online, and even take self-defense classes.

Like most millennials, social media was the way that I kept in touch with friends and family, accessed the news, and stayed up to date with grassroots movements in my community. However, after the events of May 1 and May 4, I became extremely isolated and withdrawn as my ability to express myself was significantly limited due to the safety risks posed by my engagement online.

To be clear, these are not just flashbacks and triggers: the harassment Anglin and his followers incited on various social media platforms against me continues to this day. I continue to receive threatening and harassing messages three years after Anglin initiated his troll storm. Below you can find images and text of some of the threatening, racist, and sexist comments directed at me on social media platforms within the last few years.



*Above: posted on YouTube in November 2019.*



*Above, left: sent to me Instagram on December 28, 2018. Above, right: posted by Andrew Anglin on the Daily Stormer on or around May 4, 2017(in the original, her face is visible).*



**Christopher DeLuca** 1 week ago

You think that's bad? Wait till you find out about the group asking to see her birth certificate.



REPLY

*Above: posted on YouTube in August 2020.*



**Francisco Williams** 1 day ago

Stupid ass black bitch going to the white school



REPLY



**philmatoph** 3 weeks ago

a bed wench that got her wake up call.



1



REPLY

*Above, left: posted on YouTube on November 20, 2019. Above, right: posted on YouTube in November 2019.*



**Chaasayad Sawapah** 2 weeks ago

And she still dont get it. She think that was just a fluke.



REPLY

*Above: posted on YouTube on November 16, 2019.*



**shekel stein** 1 day ago

she probably tied those bananas her self



REPLY

*Above: posted on YouTube, days ago, September 20, 2020.*

This is why I sued Andrew Anglin, *the Daily Stormer's* parent company, and two other defendants in federal court for violating the District of Columbia's Human Rights Act, which prohibits individuals from interfering with someone's use of a public accommodation, with *pro bono* representation by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the Washington Lawyers' Committee, and Kirkland & Ellis, LLP.

In *Dumpson v. Ade*, Judge Rosemary Collyer of the United States District Court of the District of Columbia set precedent by ruling that racist online harassment can interfere with an individual's equal access to a public accommodation, as I had to make significant changes to how I navigated on a day-to-day basis. Further, Judge Collier found that "a causal nexus exists between the troll storm created by [Andrew] Anglin... and [my] enjoyment of [American University] ...and that [I] was targeted because of my race and gender."

## Extremist Use of Social Media in Radicalizing America

Unfortunately, my personal experience as a victim of online hate and harassment is not unique or even infrequent. Social media platforms such as Facebook have allowed the worst and most heinous elements of society into my home and my life, and into yours too. It's created an open door to the kinds of people you would never allow anywhere near your loved ones in the physical world. All too often people say that what happens online "isn't real." Let me be clear, what happens online is very real—and the line between virtual and physical has become indistinguishable.

Over the last several years, extremists like Anglin's *Daily Stormer* followers have been empowered by access to the online world. The internet amplifies hateful voices to reach millions around the world. It does not take an expert to see the ways social media has become a universal tool for extremist movements to organize and engage in violence.

Social media also offers a virtual community for like-minded hatemongering individuals and groups. Online forums allow isolated white supremacists and extremists to become more active and involved in virtual campaigns of ideological recruitment and radicalization. Individuals can easily find sanction, support, and reinforcement online for their extreme beliefs or actions because the internet offers a reading and viewing library of tens of thousands of pieces of content.

The internet also allows hate to spread faster and wider than it ever has before. A meme that is generated by a dedicated antisemite on a toxic platform like Gab, 8kun, 4chan or messenger services used by extremists, like Telegram, can be disseminated almost instantaneously on more mainstream social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, or Reddit.



Above: meme posted on Twitter on November 14, 2017.

Once on mainstream social media sites, these hate messages, incitement and violent threats often spread faster than content moderators can catch—or, in the case of Facebook and Holocaust denial, are willing to remove. Podcasting and video sharing sites like YouTube allow white supremacists, extremists and antisemites to broadcast their hateful ideology and speak directly to users. The hateful content is "recommended" to some users because social media algorithms are trained to optimize and

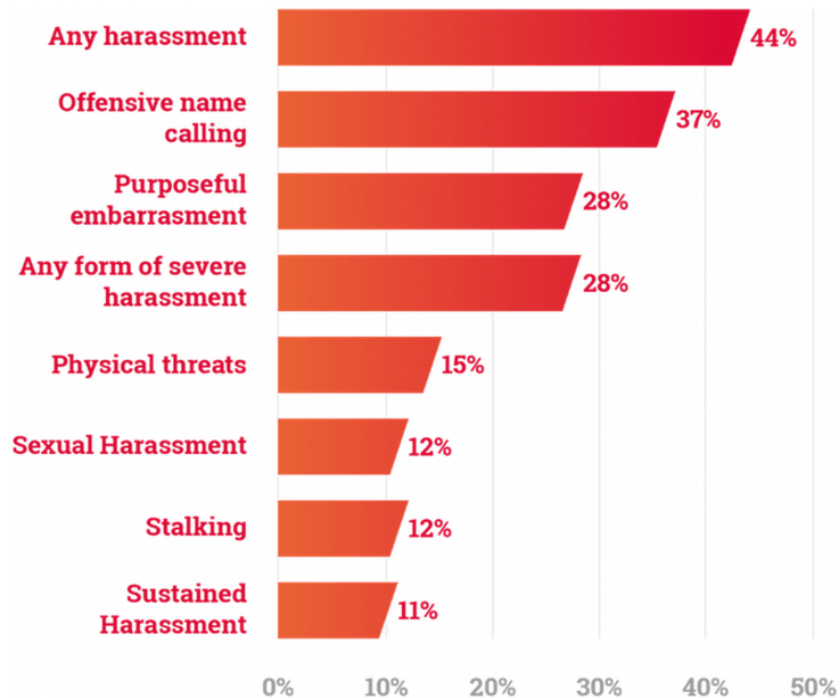
increase user engagement. So, the most problematic content on these sites is actually recommended and amplified by the social media companies themselves.

The hate crimes and incidents I experienced in May of 2017 were not the first and far from the last time social media has been used to perpetuate white supremacy and extremism. Three months after nationalizing the online attacks against me, in August 2017, Anglin used Facebook to co-organize the white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, which attracted some 600 extremists from around the country and ended in deadly violence. Members of the so-called alt right descended on the small college city and clashed with counter-demonstrators, leading to scores of injuries and the death of counter-protester Heather Heyer.

## Impact of Hate Online

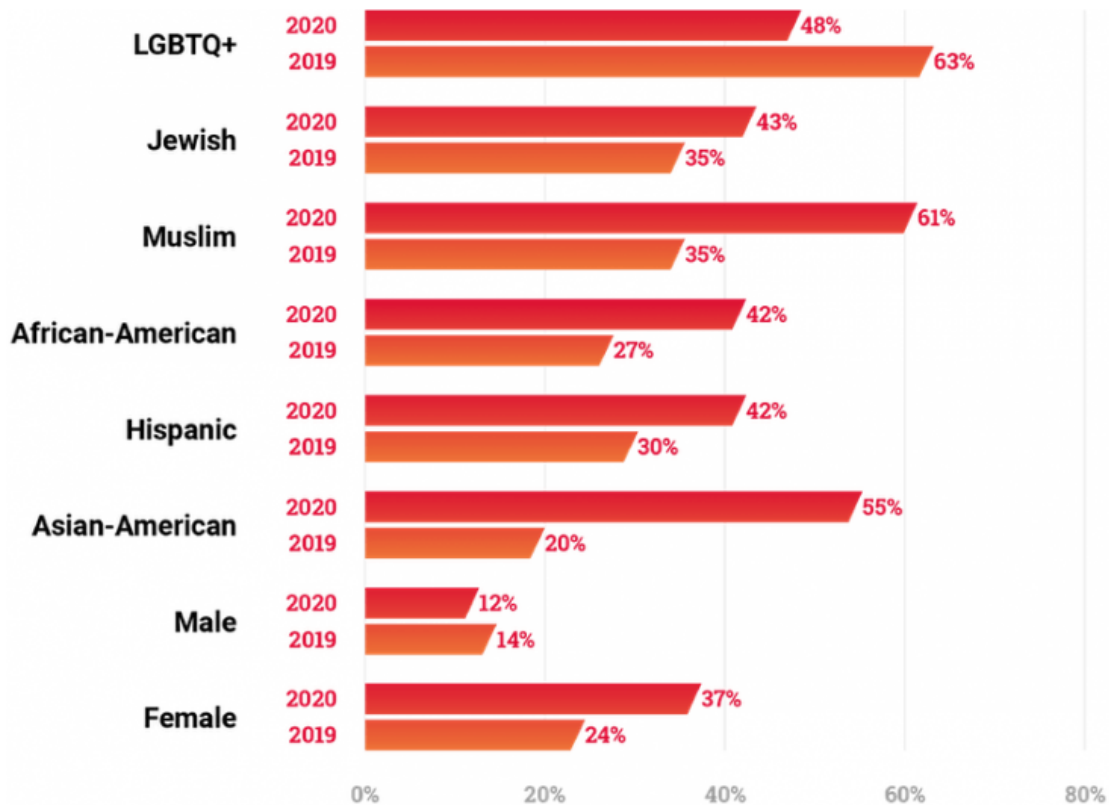
This year in particular has seen a tectonic shift in the way communities across the world integrate digital and social networks into their daily lives. Online hate and harassment were pervasive issues long before the COVID-19 pandemic, but against the backdrop of quarantine and virtual work, school, worship and social lives, this phenomenon is more pervasive than ever. The Asian, Jewish, Muslim, Latinx and immigrant communities in particular are experiencing an onslaught of targeted hate, fueled by conspiracy theories, bigotry, and racism surrounding the novel coronavirus. Also, the social justice reckoning protesting police brutality in the wake of George Floyd’s murder has spurred even more dehumanizing anti-Black racism and prejudice across social media platforms.

According to a 2020 national ADL survey (ADL’s 2020 Online Hate survey), 44 percent of Americans experienced online harassment and 28 percent experienced severe online harassment—including stalking, physical threats, swatting, doxing and sustained harassment.



*Above: Online Hate and Harassment Report: The American Experience 2020.*

It does not surprise me that ADL’s research also shows that targeting based on specific identity-characteristics is on the rise. The 2020 statistics show race-based harassment affected 55 percent of Asian-Americans and 42 percent of Hispanic and African-American respondents. Women also experienced harassment disproportionately, as 37 percent of female-identified respondents felt they were targeted because of their gender. Sixty-one percent of Muslim Americans who reported experiencing online harassment felt they were targeted because of their religion and 43 percent of Jewish Americans felt they were targeted with hateful content because of their religion. Forty-eight percent of LGBTQ+ respondents reported harassment based on their sexual orientation.



*Above: Online Hate and Harassment Report: The American Experience 2020.*

Online harassment impacts targets in a variety of ways. The most common response is to stop, reduce or change online behavior, which 36 percent of those who have been harassed have done. This can include steps like posting less often, avoiding certain sites, changing privacy settings, deleting apps, or increasing filtering of content or users. Many go further, with 18 percent of harassment targets contacting the technology platform to ask for help or report harassing content. In some cases, these behaviors were coupled with other consequences including thoughts of depression and suicide, anxiety, and economic impact.

I know I’m not alone in the call for change. According to ADL’s 2020 Online Hate survey, Americans overwhelmingly want to see concrete steps taken to address online hate and harassment. Across political ideologies, the vast majority of Americans believe that social media companies and

the government *need* to take action against online hate and harassment. In fact, 87.5 percent of Americans somewhat or strongly agree that the government should strengthen laws and improve training and resources for police on online hate and harassment. Americans also want platforms to take more action to counter or mitigate the problem. Seventy-seven percent of Americans want companies to make it easier to report hateful content and behavior.

## Big Tech is Apathetic to the Problem

In the months and years that followed the May 1 and May 4 events, I faced hurdles and struggled to regain my sense of normalcy. My PTSD is triggered each time white supremacists' attacks or anti-black racism makes its way to the news cycle. I still struggle to sleep and often have invasive thoughts about the hate crimes I experienced. And these experiences also had lingering impacts on my family and friends' mental health.

Weeks ago, Facebook was, yet again, apathetic to racism and incitement to violence. The call to arms event that resulted in the Kenosha shooting was flagged over 450 times, but Facebook did nothing. This inaction reminded me of the Orlando Pulse Nightclub attack—where the gunman allegedly used multiple Facebook accounts to search about the Islamic State and other terrorist groups before the attack and also used the site after to see if his attack went viral.<sup>1</sup>

This inaction reminded me of social media's role in the deadly 2017 Charlottesville "Unite the Right Rally," which was organized by my attacker on Facebook and the event page was up for a month, only taken down the day before the event.<sup>2</sup> It reminded me of the horrors of the New Zealand mosque shootings, livestreamed on Facebook and *still* hosted on the platform six months later.<sup>3</sup> It reminded me of Pittsburgh, El Paso, Poway, and too many other violent (and often fatal) hate crimes in which Facebook (and Big Tech) played a central role.

In ADL's 2020 Online Hate survey, 42 percent of daily Facebook users experienced harassment on the platform. Of those respondents who were harassed online, like I was, more than three-quarters (77%) reported that at least some of their harassment occurred on Facebook. It is a hotbed of hate and an all-too-easy platform to harass and terrorize targets. Below are just a couple images the Stop Hate for Profit Coalition recently shared with supporters. These images were found on Facebook in August and September 2020.

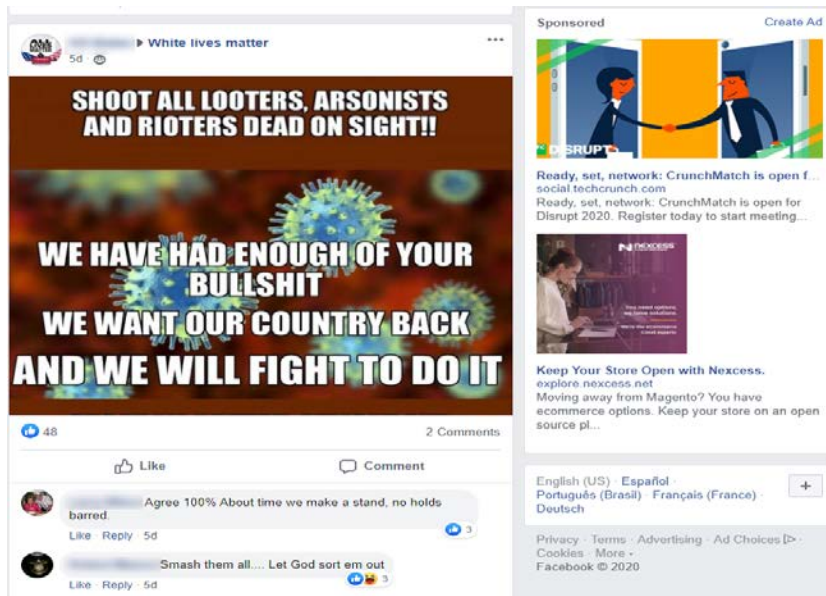
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<sup>1</sup> Blinder, Alan, et al. "Omar Mateen Posted to Facebook Amid Orlando Attack, Lawmaker Says." *The New York Times*, June 16, 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/06/17/us/orlando-shooting.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/17/us/orlando-shooting.html); Nicks, Denver. "Orlando Shooting: Omar Mateen Checked Facebook During Attack." *Time*, Time, 16 June 2016, [time.com/4371910/orlando-shooting-omar-mateen-facebook/](http://time.com/4371910/orlando-shooting-omar-mateen-facebook/).

<sup>2</sup> Heath, Alex. "Facebook Removed the Event Page for White Nationalist 'Unite the Right' Rally in Charlottesville One Day before It Took Place." *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 14 Aug. 2017, [www.businessinsider.com/facebook-removed-unite-the-right-charlottesville-rally-event-page-one-day-before-2017-8](http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-removed-unite-the-right-charlottesville-rally-event-page-one-day-before-2017-8).

<sup>3</sup> Tom Acres, technology reporter. "New Zealand Mosque Attack Videos Are Still Being Hosted on Facebook." *Sky News*, Sky, 24 Sept. 2019, [news.sky.com/story/new-zealand-mosque-attack-videos-are-still-being-hosted-on-facebook-11817602](http://news.sky.com/story/new-zealand-mosque-attack-videos-are-still-being-hosted-on-facebook-11817602).





Above: Tech Crunch ad next to white lives matter post calling for fatal violence.



Above: Spotify podcast ad next to racist/antisemitic content in holocaust denial group.



Above: Asana ad next to a racist post on page "Fuck the Organization Black Lives Matter."

## Stop Hate for Profit

In response to social media's repeated failure to meaningfully address the vast proliferation of hate on their platforms—and Facebook's particular role in this proliferation, ADL, Color of Change, Common Sense, Free Press, LULAC, Mozilla, NAACP, National Hispanic Media Center, and Sleeping Giants launched a campaign called Stop Hate for Profit. In July, the campaign called on advertisers to engage in a one-month ad pause. In September, just last week, the campaign called on A-List influencers to freeze their Instagram accounts and highlight Facebook's inaction toward electoral misinformation, hate, violence and racism.

I strongly support the [Stop Hate for Profit](#) campaign. I know what it is like to be the target of daily racist and misogynist posts, to receive threats online, and to be the subject of extremist group chats. Their request for Facebook (and the rest of Big Tech) to increase accountability, decency and victim support on the platform resonates with me both as an advocate and as a survivor (and enduring target) of online abuse. And I find comfort in knowing that thousands of major businesses including Volkswagen, Unilever, Verizon, Walgreens, KIND, Pfizer, Colgate-Palmolive, Williams Sonoma Inc., North Face and Patagonia joined in an ad pause to call on Facebook to address rampant hate, racism and disinformation on its platforms. On the other hand, it's disheartening that Mr. Zuckerberg immediately dismissed this campaign, insisting that advertisers will be back on the platform "soon enough." I understand that this is because Facebook's vast user base and reach provides a captive audience for advertisers to micro-target and engage.

Not surprisingly, when it comes to dealing with rampant hate and harassment, the platform continues to come up short—responding with PR moves at best, and apathy more often. When will enough be enough? What are they doing with \$70 billion in revenue and \$17 billion in profit? Their hate speech, incitement, and misinformation policies are inequitable. Their harassment victim services are inadequate. Their advertising placement's proximity to hateful content is haphazard. And their "civil rights" audit transparency reports aren't helpful to the civil rights community.

## Backspace Hate

As our online lives have become even more central to the way we work, communicate and socialize in this unprecedented time, it's also gotten easier than ever before for individuals to harm their targets online. I speak from personal experience. I know what it is like to have every aspect of my life invaded with racist, misogynist comments, threats and images. I know what it is like to be the target of cyberstalking and doxing—it is something no person should have to experience. But, if they do, our government needs to support the targets of these crimes and hold perpetrators accountable.

But do not take my word for it. As I mentioned above, ADL's 2020 Online Hate survey found that 28 percent of Americans experienced severe online harassment, including sexual harassment, stalking, physical threats, or sustained harassment. ADL has also done deep [ethnographic research](#) and found that individuals who were the targets of intense harassment campaigns experienced significant emotional and economic burdens. In response to these trends, over 85 percent of Americans want policymakers to strengthen laws to prevent such acts.

I'm a big supporter of ADL's "[Backspace Hate](#)," a national initiative to fight the escalating problems of harmful online activities, including cyber harassment, cyber stalking, swatting, and doxing, through updating legislation and raising awareness. Doxing is one form of online harassment that does not have adequate legal protections for targets at the state or federal level. These are tactics extremists have used to harass and terrorize targets. Swatting is the false reporting of an emergency with the goal of having a police unit or emergency response team deployed to a dwelling. It has been increasingly used as a digital harassment tactic and has resulted in injuries and trauma (and even a fatality) to both targets and unintended victims.

The prevalence of these problems is only increasing. In fact, in January 2020, one individual who was sympathetic to neo-Nazi ideology and loosely associated with the neo-Nazi group, the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), was caught after having worked with others from Canada and England to target people in a series of [multi-national swatting and doxing](#) incidents. According to ADL's Center on Extremism, cyber-harassment has been at the forefront of AWD tactics since the group's inception in 2016.

Shockingly, there are no protections for doxing or swatting at the federal level. And, in far too many states common digital tactics harassers use to harm their targets are not considered unlawful. I *was* able to sue my online tormentors, but my lawyers should not have had to find a novel legal theory and a DC-specific law to bring my case to court. What I experienced was hate crime after hate crime. I sued Andrew Anglin, *The Daily Stormer*, and two other individuals—this did not account for the thousands of people threatening my life online daily.

As part of ADL's Backspace Hate effort, several states are pursuing bipartisan legislation that address severe online harassment by holding perpetrators accountable for their actions online. For example, this past legislative session, Washington State showed tremendous leadership in enacting anti-swatting legislation protecting targets and victims from the serious and potentially fatal consequences of this digital abuse. Washington's law makes swatting a felony when it results in someone being injured or killed. The legislation also gives swatting victims and targets the right to sue and allows law enforcement or a city to seek damages. While some states have anti-swatting laws, too many do not.

In addition to advocating for specific legislation, ADL is harnessing its resources and expertise by raising awareness among policymakers, law enforcement, and supporters; building coalitions with diverse partners; gathering petition signatures to deliver to legislators; publishing research on these issues and their effects on targets; and providing recommendations for technical solutions.

## Hate Crimes

While I have focused mostly on the cyber harassment components of my experience, let me end where this started: a hate crime investigated by the Justice Department. Unfortunately, it is unusual that the hate crime against me was reported. It was the American University public safety department that made the initial report—not me. Often, victims of hate crimes do not come forward to report their experiences because they either do not trust the police, believe the police are unwilling to act, or have reason to believe they are unable to respond effectively to a hate crime. For example, I reported the cyber-harassment itself to the Metropolitan Police Department, but never heard back. That's why law

enforcement's role in responding to and reporting incidents, both online and on the ground, is so important.

While I was afraid of being physically attacked on campus and at home, many Americans are afraid that they will be attacked in their house of worship, their supermarket, or walking down the street. 2018 saw the highest number of hate crime murders on record, with 24 victims.<sup>4</sup> The second highest year for hate crime murders was 2000, with 19 victims.<sup>5</sup>

While FBI statistics are essential, we know they are incomplete. 16,039 law enforcement agencies in the United States participated in the 2018 data collection effort—the second highest level of participation since the enactment of the HCSA in 1990, but a slight decrease from 2017 record participation of 16,149. Importantly, only 2,028 of these agencies, less than 13 percent, reported one or more hate crimes to the FBI. That means that 87 percent of all participating police agencies affirmatively reported zero (0) hate crimes to the FBI (including at least 77 cities over 100,000). And eight more law enforcement agencies over 100,000 did not report any data to the FBI. According to anti-hate groups like ADL, that specialize in understanding hate crimes and advocating for more protections for targets, reports of zero hate crimes are simply not credible. These reports suggest that the number of hate crimes in America is far greater than what is reported.

It's been brought to my attention that the federal government has an essential leadership role to play in confronting hate crimes and in alleviating intolerance. The most effective response is to explicitly call out bigotry whenever and wherever it happens, and to strengthen federal hate crime prevention and response.

I am hopeful about the enactment of hate crimes laws. This is a matter with bipartisan support, as demonstrated in Georgia, which in June passed a comprehensive and inclusive hate crime law and joined the 45 other states with hate crimes laws on the books. I was heartened to learn that Governor Brian Kemp signed into law House Bill 426, the "Georgia Enhanced Penalties for Hate Crimes Act," with protections that go into effect immediately.

ADL leads the Hate Free Georgia Coalition, which played an important role in securing the passage of HB 426. HB 426 provides stronger penalties for individuals who target victims because of their actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, mental disability, or physical disability. It also requires local law enforcement agencies to collect data on hate crime investigations and provide "Bias Crime Reports" to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which is essential for effective enforcement of the law. This was a critical step towards addressing systemic racial injustice in that state. Still, there is more to do. There are states without adequate hate crime protections and hate crimes going uninvestigated or unreported. We need the full picture.

## Policy Recommendations

In partnership with ADL, I want to share the following measures that, taken together, can immediately help combat the rise in physical and online hate crimes, as well as hate incidents in general:

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<sup>4</sup> ADL, 2018 Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents <https://www.adl.org/audit2018>

<sup>5</sup> ADL, Tracker of Anti-Semitic Incidents, <https://www.adl.org/adl-tracker-of-anti-semitic-incidents>

### **1. Use the Bully Pulpit to Fight Hate: Words have power**

- o Speak up and call out racism and bigotry at every opportunity. The right to free speech is a core value, but the promotion of hate should be vehemently and consistently rejected. Often, people will say that the answer to extremism and hate speech is more speech. That premise is inherently flawed because it assumes incorrectly that more speech would be counter-speech, not simply be more hate speech. While at one time that argument might have been persuasive, during my lifetime—in the digital age—the hateful voices too often just drown out the others.
- o In this environment, the importance of ensuring that the fight against extremists not be politicized—all the more so close to the election—cannot be overstated.

### **2. Improve Federal Hate Crime Data Collection, Transparency and Support**

- o The Department of Justice should incentivize and encourage state and local law enforcement agencies to more comprehensively collect and report hate crimes to the FBI, with special attention devoted to large underreporting by law enforcement agencies that either have not participated in the FBI Hate Crime Statistics Act program at all or have affirmatively and not credibly reported zero hate crimes. More comprehensive, complete hate crime reporting—including reporting online hate crimes—can deter hate violence.
- o The federal government should provide funding for criminal investigations and prosecutions by state, local and tribal law enforcement officials, as authorized by Section 4704 of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009.

### **3. Pass Legislation to Fight Hate**

- o Pass H.R. 1931, the *Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act*: This legislation would enhance the federal government’s efforts to prevent domestic terrorism by authorizing into law the offices addressing domestic terrorism and requiring federal law enforcement agencies to regularly assess those threats and then deploy resource to the threats. The bill would also provide training and resources to assist non-federal law enforcement, requiring DOJ, DHS, and the FBI to provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in understanding, detecting, investigating, and deterring acts of domestic terrorism.
- o Pass H.R. 3545, the *Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act* of 2019, which would authorize incentive grants to encourage improved local and state hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives—including grants for state hate crime reporting hotlines to direct individuals to local law enforcement and support services.

### **4. Support More Anti-Bias Education and Training**

- o Recognizing that hate cannot be legislated or regulated out of existence, Congress should provide increased funding for inclusive school anti-bias education, civics education, and bullying prevention programs.

## 5. Address Online Hate and Harassment Through Legislation and Training

- *Review the tools and services platforms provide to targets:* Targets like myself rely on platforms to provide tools and services to report the online hate and harassment I regularly receive. I can tell you from personal experience, it isn't enough. Congress should commission research that provides a summary of the available mechanisms provided by platforms to their users to protect and defend themselves. The review process should also include a needs assessment of users and a gap analysis of available tools and services.
  
- *Strengthen laws against perpetrators of online hate:* Hate and harassment exist both on the ground and online spaces, but our laws aren't doing enough. Many forms of severe online misconduct are not consistently or adequately covered by our current cybercrime, harassment, stalking and hate crime laws. State and federal lawmakers have an opportunity to lead the fight against online hate and harassment by increasing protections for targets as well as penalties for perpetrators of severe and abusive online misconduct.
  - In July 2017, in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, Representative Katherine Clark introduced and lead H.R. 3067, the Online Safety Modernization Act, which, among other things, would have provided federal protections against doxing and swatting. We desperately need these protections.
  
- *Improve training of law enforcement:* Though the physical threat I experienced was classified as a hate crime, the online hate and harassment that terrorized me was not. Law enforcement should be a key responder to online hate and harassment, especially in cases like mine that involve direct threats. I know these cases are complicated but that is not an excuse. We must increase training and resources for agencies to ensure law enforcement personnel can better support targets. Additionally, law enforcement training on stalking, harassment, and threats should be modernized to reflect the role the internet plays in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Too often, local law enforcement agencies are not adequately equipped with technology or personnel to address the nuance in this area. Better training and resources can support better and more effective investigations and prosecutions.
  - The Department of Justice should also incentivize and encourage state and local law enforcement agencies to specifically incorporate cultural competency and trauma-informed trainings into their hate crime response trainings, as far too often survivors and targets of hate crimes are uncomfortable with reporting their experiences to members of law enforcement for fear of retraumatization. Though I reported some of the most egregious instances of hate directed at me to law enforcement, the vast majority of times I did not because of my experiences with law enforcement officers failing to act with cross-cultural awareness and empathy.

## 6. Urge Social Media Platforms to Institute Stronger Means to Measure and Address Online Hate and Harassment

- o *Strengthen and Adequately Enforce Policies Against Hate:* Social media platforms should have better community guidelines or standards that comprehensively address hateful content and harassing behavior, and clearly define consequences for violations. Platforms should prohibit toxic content from being monetized to ensure their platform cannot be used to fund extremist individuals, groups and movements. Social media platforms also need to invest in enforcement. Platforms need to use a mix of human reviewers, AI, and an appeals process that all work together to enforce their policies. Social media platforms owe their consumers an equal opportunity to engage in the digital space irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other identity-based characteristics. However, platforms fail to satisfy that obligation when they prioritize the speech rights of extremists to that of marginalized communities, who are silenced when platforms amplify hate.
- o *Expand tools and services for targets:* Given the prevalence of online hate and harassment, platforms should offer far more services and tools for individuals facing or fearing online attack. Targets should be allowed to flag multiple pieces of content, or even an entire thread, within one report instead of having to create a new report for each piece of content being flagged. I am now used to reviewing, filtering, identifying, screenshotting, and saving multiple threatening and harassing comments on a monthly basis, in the event that the comments rise to the level of a “true threat,” specifying time, place, and manner of attack—but I should not have to be. And even when I have used the reporting mechanisms provided on various social media platforms, the platforms have either failed to remove the content.
- o Alternatively, I have also received messages that platforms have decided to keep up the abusive content I have reported because it allegedly does not violate their community standards. The messages I have received that have remained up are personally violating and it is unfathomable how they would not violate community standards. I should be able to trust that social media platforms will regulate the content posted on their sites and prevent their platforms from being used to by extremists to mobilize and act on hate. The arduous process of capturing images of violating content and reporting can and should be improved. The burden of bringing hate and extremism to the attention of social media platforms should not be on the victims and targets.
- o *Increase accountability and transparency:* Platforms need a better civil rights infrastructure. They should be subject to external, independent audits. Right now, the only people who truly know the extent of hate and harassment on platforms are targets, perpetrators and the platforms themselves. I was encouraged to learn that Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee Chair Jan Schakowsky along with other Energy and Commerce Committee leadership voiced concerns about the newly launched Facebook Oversight Board, because of the lack of power it has to actually drive the necessary accountability and transparency measures necessary to decrease hate and extremism on social media. The public *needs* to know about the extent of hate, extremism and harassment on a given platform. Audits would also

allow the public to verify that the company is following through on its promises. Transparency reports should include data from user generated identity-based reporting.

## Conclusion

Thank you for calling this important hearing and for the opportunity to submit this testimony. ADL data clearly indicates that my personal experience is unfortunately not unique, that hate is rising across America and that crimes like doxing and swatting pose a significant threat to our communities. Everyday Americans are subjected to hate online but, too often we are told that because these comments and threats were made on social media platforms little can be done to regulate these actions and prevent them from happening in the future. But a lot more can be done, and Congress must be a part of the efforts to de-radicalize social media.

This is a time for leaders to lead. I urge you to speak out about the threat, legislate against it and encourage social media companies to address online hate in their platforms, so we can prevent future hate crimes and protect targets like me.