



Latino Resource &
Welcome Center
An outreach of the Sisters of St. Joseph

BEND THE ARC
jewish action
pittsburgh

Joint Statement from Bend the Arc Jewish Action: Pittsburgh and Casa San Jose Regarding the Keynote Speakers at the Eradicate Hate Global Summit

As Jewish advocates and immigration advocates, we are all too aware of the destructive and often deadly role that hatred plays in our country. We appreciate the hard work that the organizers and participants have put into the organization of the inaugural Eradicate Hate Global Summit. However, we must express our disappointment that President George W. Bush, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas, and founding DHS Secretary Tom Ridge are keynote speakers.

Their inclusion undermines the bold and admirable mission of the Eradicate Hate Global Summit, and turns a blind eye to the roots of the hatred that led to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting. Although the murderer targeted the Jewish community, he believed in a white supremacist conspiracy called “replacement theory” that also targets Black and Brown immigrants and refugees. Replacement theory is the lie that Jewish people control immigration to the United States, and that their goal is to turn white people into a minority in the U.S. by replacing them with immigrants from across the globe. When white supremacists in Charlottesville in 2017 chanted, “Jews will not replace us,” they were referring to this conspiracy theory. The Pittsburgh synagogue shooter wrote on social media that he explicitly targeted members of the Jewish community who supported the humanitarian work of HIAS, the century-old Jewish organization that helps immigrants and refugees resettle in the United States. He killed Jews to keep immigrants, particularly from Latin America and the Caribbean, out of the United States.

Replacement theory, like other expressions of violent extremism studied by the summit’s participants, targets Jews, immigrants, and many other groups in this country and around the world. White supremacist ideologies circulate through global communication networks, connecting the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting to those that followed in New Zealand, El Paso, and beyond. An “appropriate and enduring response to the Tree of Life shootings,” as the summit envisions, must acknowledge all these hatreds – not one at the expense of another. We do not want to center antisemitism at the expense of any other community.

It is gratifying that President Bush, Secretary Mayorkas, and Mr. Ridge wish to lend their stature to the cause of eradicating hate, and we recognize that their prominence helps to draw attention to the ambitious and critical work of all the summit attendees. However, the legacy of their work stands in stark contrast to lofty goals of the summit itself.

President George W. Bush’s legacy is one of promoting, not eradicating, hate. In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush responded by creating the Department of Homeland Security, inaugurated under Secretary Tom Ridge’s leadership. The Bush administration and DHS exploited anti-Islamic fervor to justify an aggressive expansion of domestic surveillance, harassment, and entrapment of Americans who practice Islam, have Arab or Middle Eastern heritage, or fit a stereotype of these cultures. This legacy continues to this day, as DHS under the leadership of Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas continues to disproportionately criminalize, detain, and deport immigrants from not only the Middle East, but also Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. The violent and cruel enforcement tactics used by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), both sub-agencies of DHS, do not eradicate hate—they use state power to legitimize discrimination and xenophobia.

If one of the summit’s goals is to “maintain broad public vigilance against hate crimes by highlighting the diversity of its victims,” we need to acknowledge that the people targeted by the War on Terror and DHS are often themselves victims of hate. We need to acknowledge that elevating the voices of Bush, Ridge, and Mayorkas in a conference against hate instead whitewashes their roles in racially-based human rights abuses. We at Bend the Arc Jewish Action: Pittsburgh and Casa San Jose believe that the inability to see how centering these men contradicts the conference’s goals shows just how deeply embedded white supremacy is in our nation. Denying uncomfortable truths does not help us in our efforts to eradicate hate.

We ask the participants in the Eradicate Hate Global Summit, who themselves surely understand the role these three men have played, to use their voices and expertise to speak up alongside us.



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About Bend the Arc Jewish Action: Pittsburgh

Bend the Arc Jewish Action: Pittsburgh is part of a movement of tens of thousands of progressive Jews across the country who are fighting for justice and equality for all. It is the only national Jewish organization focused exclusively on social change in the United States.

About Casa San Jose

Casa San Jose is a community resource center that advocates for and empowers Latinos by promoting integration and self-sufficiency in the Greater Pittsburgh area.