WHY WON'T BIG TECH CLEAN UP ITS ANTI-SEMITIC TOXIC WASTE DUMP?
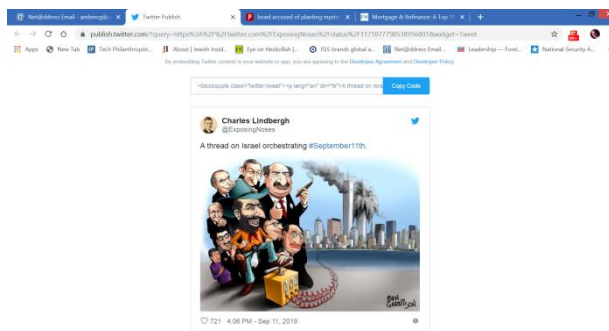
Amb. Marc Ginsberg, President, Coalition for a Safer Web

Eric Feinberg, Vice President for Content Moderation, Coalition for a Safer Web, CEO of GIPEC, Inc.

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Last century Americans were compelled to drink polluted water because unregulated chemical companies could freely dump their toxic waste into rivers and streams. It took new laws and regulations to end their nefarious deeds. This century, Americans are victims of a new type of toxic waste dump of on-line hate and extremism and the digital sewage shows little sign of abating. It will take new regulations to stop it, as well.

On the eve of the Jewish High Holy Days, America's Jews face a rising tide of violent anti-Semitic hate crimes. This intolerable development must not be tolerated – but turning it back will take require more than angst and anger. The Jew-haters must be de-fanged and the Jewish community must be better mobilized to respond.

Anti-Semitism Slinks Its Way Across the Internet

The evil surge of anti-Semitism cannot be traced to one cause, but undeniably it is partially the fault of social media platforms and internet service companies which have been weaponized by neo-Nazi, white nationalist lone wolfs and organized web-based "communities" to incite and inspire attacks on Jewish-Americans.

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On October 27, 2018, Robert Gregory Bowers stormed into Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue [gun] and opened fire on the congregation, murdering eleven congregants, and injuring six.

The massacre coincided with the publication of reports detailing the growing scourge of social media anti-Semitic incitement not only on GAB and other so-called "Dark Web" platforms such as 4Chan & 8Chan, but also on "mainstream" social media platforms, including the "Big 4" (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) – and far too much of it is in plain sight.

Bower posted a pre-attack anti-Semitic rant on Gab, and the gunman who opened fire at the Poway, CA synagogue in April posted an anti-Semitic harangue on 8Chan. The higher the body count, the more celebratory is the digital chorus from slithering white nationalist groups rejoicing in their community chat rooms.

The heightened anti-Semitic social media incitement coincides with an FBI report that the US experienced 7,175 hate crimes in 2017 – a 17% jump from 2016. The FBI added that there was a 37% spike in crimes targeting Jews and Jewish institutions. The Anti-Defamation League's 2018 audit of anti-Semitic incidents sites a 105% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the US over 2017. FBI Director Wray stated in July that the FBI made 100 domestic terrorism-related arrests since October 2019, and the majority were tied to white supremacy.

<u>The Virtual Arms Race Against White Nationalists</u>

Stopping domestic terrorists like Bowers requires more than one tool in a tool chest of solutions. It's a virtual arms race, with responsible social media companies contending they are doing their best to stay ahead of the extremist deluge and those identified and banned figuring out new ways to outfox the new artificial intelligence tools and armies of content "flaggers."

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Take for example Google. Google's executives assure us they have deployed state of the art artificial intelligence to interdict hate and incitement content. That's all well and good, but, Oy Vey, AI does not speak Yiddish. Google plays host to "GDL.com" or the GOYIM Defense League – a rabid anti-Semitic platform created to "cease defamation of the non-Jewish people." Facebook hosts "GoyTalk.com", another putrid platform purveying in anti-Semitic incitement.

The ever sinister and cunning white nationalists have hijacked Yiddish and Hebrew words and acronyms to escape the AI dragnets and the human flaggers that have been hired to interdict the toxic content. Several months ago, I flagged on YouTube (YouTube Needs a #MeToo Moment, Diplomatic Courier, June 20, 2019) existence of anti-Semitic video games located on various YouTube sites by inserting the innocent-looking acronym "ZOG" into the YouTube searchbar. ZOG stands for Zionist Organized Governments" - a favored camouflage internet acronym for white nationalist organizations. The ZOG "Chanukah Special Nightmare #2" shoot em up targets Jews.

Several weeks ago, we dispatched a FED EX letter to YouTube CEO Susan Woijicki asking that any "ZOG" hate videos be deleted. She failed to answer. Today, the video game is still on YouTube's platform. So much for Ms. Woijicki's assurances that YouTube will not tolerate anti-Semitic garbage. Ms. Woijicki and her fellow YouTube executives are callously unable or unwilling to devote the technological resources to de-platform anti-Semitic video games or terrorist supporting "how to build a bomb" videos rampant all over YouTube. Shame on her and them!

<u>Rebranding Neo-Nazi Content to Evade Takedown</u>

From one social media platform to the other neo-Nazis are outsmarting Silicon Valley. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube remain at risk – leaving you at risk.

White nationalist groups banned by Facebook remain on its platform. Even though they were "de-platformed" they were able to evade Facebook's technology dragnet by

"rebranding" themselves. Members of "Soldiers of Odin" – a neo-Nazi outfit – was banned by Facebook, but its members created a new username "Patriots of Odin" and, voila, they were back on Facebook, with Facebook none the wiser.

Fascists Form "The "Base" Thanks to Internet Service Companies

A neo-Nazi who goes by the alias Norman Spear has organized a social media-based initiative to unity all North America's on-line violent fascists. His goal is to link together a vast coalition of cells to train a new generation of neo-Nazi terrorists to prepare for a "race war." He is having great success, at our expense.

The cowardly "Spear" uses a social media network he calls "The Base" undergirded by the very internet infrastructure companies which enable channels such as 8Chan to operate. The Base's online library (reported by VICE on August 19, 2019) includes ways to "meet up" in secret, an on-line library of terrorist manuals, data mining, counter-surveillance techniques, bomb-making, chemical weapons creation, and guerilla warfare, as well as discussion groups how to target Jews. The Base is growing rapidly, spanning the Atlantic to include the Atomwaffen Division – a violent neo-Nazi terror group already linked to hate crimes operating in Germany and Scandinavia. The Base is a clear and present danger to America's Jewish community.

Twitter serves as an incubator for The Base even though its management, unlike YouTube's management, devotes considerable resources to interdict white nationalist twitter accounts. But the most popular hashtag on Twitter is #whitegenocide which is a connector for the calumny that Jews are plotting to supplant white Christians with illegal immigrants and refugees

The "Base" would be hard pressed to operate without the support of unregulated internet infrastructure companies such as CLOUDFARE or EPIK, or BIT MITIGATE or VOXILITY – all provided web services such as web address registrations – for a fee. The "Dark Web" support system enables neo-Nazi cells to operate away from the prying eyes of

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major social media companies, who by dint of their algorithms enable users to virtually leapfrog from their platforms to the neo-Nazi "Dark Web" crevices. Cutting the Base off from internet service providers will not kill of the Base, but like hunting down terrorists, it keeps them on the run until they are brought to justice.

These internet service providers insist they are merely operating a business – and hate speech is protected by the First Amendment. That argument is an alibi to condone incitement and inspire acts of white nationalist violence.

A Neo-Nazi Internet List of Jewish Critics of White Nationalism

A few days ago, Mother Jones' Ali Breland revealed that anti-Jewish "trolls" are creating an on-line list of Jews who are critical of neo-Nazis/white nationalists. No surprise here. What is surprising is that since its creation almost a month ago, it has developed into the fastest-growing neo-Nazi group on the popular TELEGRAM chat service. The growing list is obviously intended to single out for web harassment (or worse) anyone critical of the cause who happens to be Jewish. The chat service is growing daily and now has over 2,400 subscribers. TELEGRAM enables encryption of the back and forth among these basement dwellers. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D.CT) is at the top of the list.

CSW is working on technical and legislative recommendations to make it a federal crime to "troll" anyone on account of their race, color, or creed.

Fighting On-Line Anti-Semitism Takes a Jewish Village

National Jewish organizations know the problem is growing, but have not developed an adequate concerted, tangible call to action. Placing our faith in federal and state authorities to prevent similar attacks is insufficient since they must contend with the absence of a domestic terrorism law and the likes of the ACLU which is using the bugaboo of internet regulation as an alibi to do nothing. Moreover, relying on social media platforms' vague assurances they are doing the best they can does not cut it.

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Consequently, there is no consensus what solution or solutions could constitute a technological and policy "moonshot" to take the battle to the source.

The Coalition for a Safer Web

The Coalition for a Safer Web (CSW) (www.coalitionsw.org) was formed a few months ago to develop a new public/private sector approach to galvanize forces of good to battle on-line hate and extremism. Its mission is to bring safety back to the web by advocating specific measures to combat the likes of web-based anti-Semitism. Unlike essential monitoring/advocacy organizations such as the ADL which tracks the scourge, the CSW proposes a comprehensive action-oriented public/private sector agenda.

This agenda includes:

● Create a new public/private sector independent social media auditing board to shed a spotlight on BigTech's accountability of its assertions of progress or inability to combat on-line anti-Semitism.

● Accelerate plans by America's major corporate digital advertisers to use their financial advertising influence to advocate and support innovative technologies to help social media companies fill the gaps in their own API to prevent permanently shut down anti-Semitic content.

● Convene a national meeting of technological experts to launch a technological "moonshot" initiative to develop new software which would address what social media cannot seem to solve. Demand social media companies publicly justify why they refuse to adopt new third-party state of the art software which could increase their ability to combat web-based anti-Semitism.

- **Develop a shareholder advocacy initiative.** So long as major social media sites remain unregulated, shareholder action is imperative to compel attention and more action at corporate headquarters. Major Jewish corporate philanthropists and business leaders should step up to help lead shareholders' action initiatives at annual social media shareholder meetings to galvanize support for this agenda.

The Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations has a critical role to play here to encourage Jewish corporate anti-Semitic action in collaboration with the CSW.

- **Support leading software experts, including UC Berkeley's Hany Farid and Eric Feinberg (co-author of this article)** who have proven time again that software they separately developed has warp-speed power to track vocabulary and video-based anti-Semitic content, but social media companies refuse to integrate their technologies into their own AI operations.

- **Recommend to Congress it consider new legislation to rein in social media's blanket content immunity accorded social media companies under Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act (CDA).** Congress is tied up in knots about the CDA. Practical legislation would compel social media and internet infrastructure companies provide to Congress semi-annual reports of legislatively defined "best efforts" that have deployed to tackle the web incitement and extremism.

- **Support pending House legislation to create in the Department of Homeland Security a "national commission"** which would be empowered the issue subpoenas and hold hearings to assess how social media companies are responding to the threat. The legislation could become an essential cog in a more comprehensive oversight agenda.

- **Tune in on what is NOT being done by the Trump Administration.** This White House has diverted essential federal resources needed to deal with the threat from law enforcement to pay for its border wall. It cut $18 million (from $21 million to $3

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million) from the Office of Community Partnerships needed to engage in counter-vailing extremism programs. Even then, the full amount is a drop in the bucket.

- **The White House has opposed a new domestic terrorism law – which dredges up reminders of our pre-9/11 legal handcuffs. National Jewish organizations need to rally behind new efforts to restore and increase domestic programs essential to law enforcement's needs to combat the threat.**

- **Finally, public regulation of social media and web infrastructure companies must be on the table. For social media companies to contend they are no longer originators of content is false. Facebook now produces content and it should lead its brethren to permit private sector independent oversight to integrate better technological protections against the anti-Semitic demons they help enable. Until now social media platforms have cleverly evaded adequate independent scrutiny to assess whether their pledges to rid their sites of toxic content are reliable. Facebook announced it is setting up an internal commission to oversee this and other issues – but it is still the same old same old – the offender monitoring itself. That evasion of verifiable oversight is no longer justified given the public security threat to the Jewish community.**

This is part of a comprehensive agenda proposed by the CSW which the Jewish community can own and endorse with financial and organizational support.

The Jewish community – with its assets, intellect, and urgent task at hand must step to the forefront to help lead the fight to cleanse the internet of violent anti-Semitic and other extremist web-based pogroms. The America our ancestors sought refuge in depends on it.

On the eve of Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year) the Shofar (ram's horn) is sounding the call to virtual arms.

Follow Marc Ginsberg

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@ambmcg

ambmcg@usa.net

www.coalitionsw.org