



On Monday, October 2, 2023, a group of self-proclaimed Nazis attended the Mayoral candidate forum in Franklin in support of candidate Gabrielle Hanson. When questioned at the time, Hanson refused to comment about them. She later claimed that she did not hire them to be there and that she is not associated with their group - but she was willing to allow them to surround her and escort her both into and out of the event, casting an ominous shadow on the race for Mayor in Franklin.

The growing normalization of antisemitic, racist, homophobic, and violent rhetoric by elected officials, those seeking elected office, and those willing to use violence, intimidation, and harassment in promoting these officials, is a growing trend and something that elected officials must repudiate.

Without leadership from our elected officials, where does this end? If history is a guide, turning a deaf ear to the loud drumbeat of Nazi-inspired hate will lead to an increase of violent threats against all of us deemed not White enough, not straight enough, not Christian enough to meet their twisted ideas of who can be accepted as a valued and accepted member of the community. Further, it damages and weakens democratic norms and civic life for every one of us, and ultimately can lead to the fascism that our parents and grandparents fought against during WWII.

For generations, we have taught Never Again and encouraged our children to be upstanders rather than bystanders if witnessing evil in our midst. Now is the moment to stand tall, loud, and proud as upstanders willing to have the courage to call out not only the Nazis but those who seek to accept their support for political gain and power.

The words and deeds of those who promote violence and seek to do us harm have infiltrated our body politic as too many elected officials have willingly accepted their support and wittingly endorsed their actions. It is not enough to not “hire” them for your service. They must be denounced and exiled from forums of respectful civic engagement. These individuals have their right to free speech, and they are within their rights to advocate for their white supremacist ideals, but we cannot and must not be silent as candidates court and embrace them. We must demand a higher standard for those holding elected office.

The vicious ideology of hate promoted by these groups will not go away on its own. We call upon every elected official, and every candidate running for office, to state unequivocally that the tactics of harassment, intimidation, bigotry, and hate, will not be condoned or endorsed. Political violence must be condemned at every turn, and those who engage in such violence held accountable. Officials and candidates for office who tacitly encourage this behavior, and accept support from groups promoting these ideologies, must also be held accountable at the ballot box.

Sincerely,

Leslie Kirby, President
Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville
Rabbi Dan Horwitz, CEO
Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville
Deborah Oleshansky, JCRC Director
Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville

Phil Cobucci, Executive Director + Founder
Inclusion Tennessee
Jennifer Cortez, Co-Founder, *One WillCo*
Rabbi Michael Danziger,
The Temple - Congregation Ohabai Sholom
Ari Dubin, Executive Director, *Vanderbilt Hillel*
Dr. Anita L. Herron, MNPD, *Office of Community Outreach and Partnerships (OCOP)*
Pam Kelner, *Jewish Family Service*
Rabbi Joshua Kullock, *West End Synagogue*
Rabbi Shana Mackler,
The Temple – Congregation Ohobai Sholom

Rev. Rusty McCown
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Sabina Mohyuddin, Executive Director
American Muslim Advisory Council
The Rev. Monna Mayhall, Associate Rector,
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
David Osgood, *Islamic Center of Williamson County*
Revida Rahman, Co-Founder, *One WillCo*
Rabbi Flip Rice, *Congregation Micah*
Rabbi Laurie Rice, *Congregation Micah*
Rev. Dr. Kevin Riggs, Senior Pastor
Franklin Community Church
Walter Simmons, Jr.,
Franklin Justice and Equity Coalition
Rabbi Saul Strosberg, *Sherith Israel*
Rabbi Yitzchok Tiechtel, *Chabad of Nashville*
Dr. Chris Williamson, Senior Pastor
Strong Tower Bible Church
Debby Wiston, Executive Director
West End Synagogue