

Needham Human Rights Committee
April 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes

In attendance:

- Marlene
- Bud
- Amelia
- Nate
- Finn
- Emme
- Katie
- Tina
- Kerry
- Cynthia
- Belinda
- Jennifer

Excused:

- Rinaz

Public participation:

6 people

Approval of minutes from last meeting:

Marlene motioned to approve

Kerry second

All agree with changes

Jennifer abstains

Guest Speaker: Calum Farley

- Landscape of extremism
- Investigate researcher at NDL, monitors NeoNazi organizations???
- "The landscape of Extremism in New England." The goal of the presentation is to educate communities on local right-wing extremist groups and create awareness of the tactics and symbols used by these groups."
 - Antisemitism in the U.S.
 - Shrink it down to the U.S.
 - Three most active groups

Come across extremist images on day to day basis→ want to monitor images, help those targeted

- **Goal of saving Lives - Center of ADL**
 - Media
 - Jewish institutions
 - Civil rights groups NGOs

- Law Enforcement
- Big Tech
- Intelligence Agencies
- Community Partners

ADLs Center Of extremism

- Staff of over 300 investigators, analyst, researchers
- “Monitor, expose, disrupt extremists”
- ADL resources for Law enforcement, and community
- Hate symbols database, HEAT map, reports and publications,
- Help people understand different language and symbols of extremists
- Want to be resource for general public in addition to helping law enforcement
- Compile all extremist activity → terrorist groups, hate crimes, extremist languages, etc
- HEAT map → look at all incidents of extremists documents, can be filtered by date, type, group, etc
 - Can find extremism occurring in neighborhoods
 - Focus on antisemitism

Murder and Extremism

- 25 murders linked to extremist ideology → all committed by right-wing extremists
- Extremist murders have larger psychological effect, effects entire community
 - Buffalo shooting in May 2022 (target of Black Americans by white extremist perpetrator)
- Over past ten years → 444 total deaths, 75% caused by right-wing extremist movement followers
 - Trend of right-wing/domestic extremists

White Supremacist Prison Gangs:

- Helpful tool for police enforcement
- Catalog of ideologies of White Supremacist prison gangs
- Tons of research into different aspects of the gangs → research aims to inform law enforcement, community partners, but also the public
 - Look into role of women in gangs
 - Codes and languages of gangs, what symbols are used

Glossary of Extremist

- Update frequently with new terms/trends for public
- Entries include term, in depth explanation, key words, image or example

Hate Symbols database founded in 2000

- Help people recognize symbols and presence of extremists and anti-Semitism
- Can filter by categories (acronyms, slang, abbreviations, etc)
- Newer hate symbols spread throughout online trolling/usage into real world

- Focus on tracking use on internet, social media
- Researched heavily, uses of symbols

Antisemitism in the US— findings of ADL's 2022 Audit of antisemitic incidents

- One of biggest annual report
- All incidents of anti semitism in the U.S. in 2022
- Much further, broader categories of hate incidents
- Trends from past decade
 - Dramatic increase since 2016→ highest incidents in 2016 and 2022 since 1992
 - Deeply disturbing that antisemitism is reaching new heights in modern day
 - Similar to rising hate crimes on Black americans, LGBTQ+, Asian, other minorities
- New details in trends in Anti Semitism in the U.S. based off trend findings of other groups
- Harassment, vandalism, assault of Jewish individuals increased in past 2 years
 - Vandalism up by almost 400 incidents
- Important finding of 2021 audit→ spike of incidents in May 2021
- In eyes of antisemites→ being Jewish puts individual at threat for assault regardless of nationality, residence, identification, etc
- Spikes in antisemitic incidents spike in January, May, November
- 2022 → 8 months that broke the trend
 - Highest number of incidents ever recorded in single month in November 2022

Anti Semitic Propaganda → spread through flyers

- Propaganda distribution increasing

Our Community:

- Shifts in trends from 2021-2022 - Anti-Semitic Acts
 - Rhode Island rose in incidents from 2021-22
 - CT rose from 34→ 61
 - MA led the region with 152 from last year, 102/8 last year
- Overall a slight shift up
- White Supremacy Incidents
 - MA: 2021- 272, 2022- 450+
 - RI: 2021- 76 2022- 142
 - CT: 2021- 97 2022- 207
 - Heat map allows viewer to see specific incidents, locations, and perpetrator group

White Supremacy Groups→

- White supremacy refers to large collection of groups, same overall views of world
 - White people should have dominance over others, due to inherent cultural and genetic superiority
 - Need to establish white ethno-state

- Idea of “white genocide”, “extinction”, fear that whites are going extinct/being destroyed
- Pro-choice legislation, feminism, women's movements, diversity, removal of confederate statues are all evidence/threats to white people
- 6 major sub groupings
 - Neonazi
 - Racist skinhead
 - Alt right→ popular in younger generations, teamed up with Kanye West, mostly online group
 - White supremacist prison gang
 - Religious white supremacy→ group of people focused on religion/God's will rather than biology/scientific
 - Traditional white supremacist→ ku klux klan, groups from pre civil rights movement

Patriot Front

- Founded by Thomas Ryan Rousseau→ brings “gen z” ideas to movement
- Extreme Patriotism with white nationalism and fascism
- Avoid traditional white supremacist iconography and language→ more difficult to identify
- Strip their public messages with _____ content
- Patriot front responsible for 80% of propaganda
- **Propaganda campaigns** allow white supremacist to spread ideas without social media backlash, public exposure
- Easier to put up propaganda in public→ people don't know who they are, but still spreading ideas
- Shows examples of propaganda
- Not directly hateful, want to draw people in to website→ curious people get pulled in more and more to radical white supremacist ideas after seeing propaganda
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- **Flash demonstrations**
- 100 members of patriot front marched through Boston (July 2, 2022_→ similar demonstrations in DC, Nashville, San Antonio, Chicago)
- Focus on historical locations or specific American holidays for demonstrations
- **Anti LGBTQ agenda**
- Frame beliefs→ believe LGBTQ are pedophiles, threat to white families and children, therefore whites must be protected to ensure safe future of US
- **Historically been difficult to find Patriot Front**
- Unicorn Riot→ hacking group that exposed Patriot Front media/footage
- One in five patriot front are connected/involved in military→ alarming because members are trained in case of assault situation
- MA involved in network 7
- New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania in network 10

- Putting up propaganda is requirement for group→ given quota for number of propaganda pieces to put up and must send pictures/evidence
 - One single individual responsible for 81 pieces of propaganda
 - Shows that presence of members may not be as large as it seems
- **Anti Semitism within patriot front movement**
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Nationalist Social Club (NSC)

- Founded in 2019
- Neonazi group
- Dedicated to covering up gang graffiti and anarchists with their own graffiti
- Underground network of white men who are willing to fight the Jewish based society
- Heavily based in Massachusetts
- Small autonomous chapters in the New England region states
- 35-40 members, usually members who were previously involved in other groups
- Leader was actually a member of Patriot Front
- Small number still represents a noble growth for the group
- Targeting has become more aggressive and frequent, a lot more confrontational
- Messages are abundant in protests but also in propaganda as well
- Shows propaganda
- Increase in flyering for groups, seen success in NSC so other groups replicate

Goyim Defense League

- Spread myths and conspiracy theories of jews
- Expel Jews from America
- Use modern issues/ideas mixed with anti semitic and homophobic theories
 - Putin
 - Disney = Jews
- Name the nose tours→ gather in city to rent vehicle covered with white supremacist, antisemitic, homophobic phrases
- Able to livestream events and pull donations for their groups, livestreams raise money for group
- Merchandise is sold by these groups to fundraise
- **A way to monetize hate**

How to help→ report hate info to website, call policymakers, share COE's resources w others, offers groups to reach out to

Tina: How does ADL define extremism? Huge range

- **Calum:** Beliefs that are widely outside of societal norms. Not all forms of extremism are bad (abolition) extremism doesn't necessarily mean it's bad
- Go out of political, electoral norms of the U.S.

Tina: Are these groups well-funded, other groups outside of the GDL, how is the money funneling in?

Calum: Patriot group is well funded - monthly dues from members: main source of revenue

- GDL is an outlier by using streaming services
- Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies are used to fundraise

Tina: How many women are involved in groups?

Calum: patriot front is male only association

- National social club is male only, but women included in private gatherings
- National socialist movement have female members
 - Difficult for women to get involved due to patriarchal, traditional values

Bud: other minority groups targeted? What other issues are targeted?

Calum:

- Other forms of hate are focused on as well
- Looking to partner with other organizations to analyze/ understand hate
- White supremacists "don't discriminate on who they hate"

Cynthia: Workings with other groups, Southern Poverty Law Center?

Calum: Don't work super closely with them

- On an intelligence basis, sharing info
- Working with community groups
- Partnerships more on a local level

Question in q&a:

"1) Thankfully, the ADL does a good job keeping records about anti-semitic (and other) incidents, so that the public can see trends and types of behavior.

I would like to hear more about prevention. For example does the ADL respond openly and directly to statements made by certain US politicians that are deemed to encourage white nationalist affiliation and activity? E.g., personal communication with these politicians about their language and behavior?

Calum:

- **Does not contact politicians on that sort of basis**
- **Set in stone individuals**
- **No effect on their platforms**

2) What actions does the ADL (or other law enforcement agencies, like the DOJ) do to identify and curtail the distribution of "anti" materials?

Calum:

- **Trying to work with local law enforcement to combat the spread of this**

3) How confident can we be that Law Enforcement agencies in the US are not infiltrated by white nationalist members? For example, are new candidates for the police force screened for attitudes and behaviors that suggest that they might be sympathetic to white supremacist ideology?"

Calum: - Cannot accurately answer

- Depend on agency to agency

- How they investigate

I missed the first 10 minutes of the presentation, but I was wondering what the ADL is learning about pathways to violent extremism. That is, how do we recognize when someone we know is exhibiting risk factors or starting to engage—and what community prevention pathways do you suggest (or know of) once that happens?

Calum:

- **Helping to educate teens on what their being exposed to**
- **Majority of those being exposed are young, 17-19 years old**

Calum: always good to share with local communities

Reactions to the Presentation:

Amelia suggests to send recordings of the presentation to other groups due to its excellence

Jen to Belinda: wondering if there's training in the Needham police department for identifying white supremacist groups?

Belinda: Yes, we look into social media, acquaintances. Definitely dig a lot

Tina to Belinda : was any of that surprising to you

Belinda: No, not particular to Massachusetts, everything is on the rise right now and we're just exposed to it

Katie: The reporting piece is interesting for all of us whether there is a discrimination complaint process or not. It would be good to have someone to report incidents like this in the future. We've had Patriot Front stickers put up before and I didn't know to report it.

Jen: Patriot Front is close enough to some of our mainstream politics. How dangerous is it to young, impressionable minds? Is there talk of it at the high school?

Emme: Racist symbols have been addressed, besides that not much. Patriot Front lures people in.

Message in chat: DHS has a prevention grant that focuses on how informal mental health and civic interventions can partner with law enforcement in prevention...

Risk factors for violent extremism, for youth and others:

https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/risk_factors_and_indicators.pdf

Jen: Im wondering if we can connect with Dr. Gudekantz about having further involvement in school.

Finn: Emme and I met with Dr. G and he said he wants to have communication with committee and help out in any way.

Provided in the chat:

“DHS has a prevention grant that focuses on how informal mental health and civic interventions can partner with law enforcement in prevention...”

Bud to Cynthia: is the clergy involved in combating any hate crimes?

Cynthia: clergy is always trying to stay connected and help community, thanks for bringing that up

Tina: Marlene and I have reworked documentation, gotten feedback from Select Board members

- Changed flow chart
- Changed language
- Pieces from Nuari

To emphasize this is something the town wants

Any comments or feedback?

Cynthia: I respect what you're doing and I respect what you're doing. Would you be willing to share a draft before presenting?

Tina: That's fine, Marlene?

Marlene: That's fine. Katie, I was wondering if it makes sense for members of the committee to send notes to select boards as individuals?

Katie: feedback is always welcome

Marlene: there's a member of the select board who will hopefully come up to speed.

Tina: She is at least familiar with what we're doing. She has an idea of what's going on and I've touched base with her since the election but she doesn't know the full history of what's going on. She can make educated decisions on the process and where it all stands. I can send out the draft but I need feedback as soon as possible. I'm hoping we can move forward but we still have a lot to hammer out for marketing the process and HRC in general. First few cases will be a lot of trial and error, so we will be over a significant hump but there's a lot more road ahead of us.

Marlene: I think the flowchart has been simplified and makes a lot more sense. It's based on the feedback from the select board and I feel good about this one. Don't you Tina?

Tina: I do. Okay so get responses back to me by Sunday so I can turn it in on Monday. Rinaz is not here to talk about Multicultural festival. Eliot festival is this weekend. I'm going to attend that to compare the two festivals. I would love to hear how that wrap up meeting went?

Amelia: I'm trying to think, I know a survey went out and we are waiting on responses. It was very successful and the community would welcome it again. Leadership is important for running the festival, Rinaz will not do it again. A few people indicated some interest. I think we are going to meet again. Zinot is going to gather her information and we will probably meet again to think about next time. Larger space is critical for many reasons. Marlene do you remember?

Marlene: Bala said she might step up. She said "I'm not on NHRC" and we said that's okay. There was a lot of enthusiasm. I thought we should do it every other year just because it's such a huge undertaking but no one picked up on that. It was a communal high. We never expected those numbers

Cynthia: I was part of the meeting. We didn't know Rinaz was leaving. Brought up to the NHRC if anyone would volunteer their leadership for the festival. Trying to capture in their feedback: the unique and marvelous connections that they found through the fair, so many common interests and relationships created. "Nothing like this had ever happened before in Needham" bringing the diversity of our town to the forefront. A positive side to what NHRC is all about.

Tina: A lot of things that had to be ironed out, certainly things can be improved on. Let us know how things move forward and how we can continue to provide this.

Lisa and Rinaz will be leaving the committee. Rinaz has completed her service and Lisa will complete hers in June. Possible new members will be reviewed. We don't have an onboarding process. Subcommittee to work out new members? Need advice from the group.

Marlene: I think this is important because we can formulate an identity for ourselves. It's not just about the committee but it's also about the specific members. Important to put together a document, which we can hand down.

Jennifer: Summer isn't a great time but to start the year with some kind of retreat or event for our committee to take advantage/ education pieces, meet and greet pieces that'll make our committee more cohesive. Will help mesh the group for next year's group. Will want to mesh the group.

Bud: What are our passions? Our backgrounds? What it is we're interested in. This'll bring our group together. Want to know and meet people more intimately as a committee.

Amelia: We're constantly thinking about replacing people and new candidates. Contacted somehow who is interested in the position

Tina: Would anyone be willing to be involved in the onboarding process?

Marlene: I would be happy to do that. I'm working on a lot of things right now, so I would need people to help out too. Anyone? → Jen, Amelia, Bud, Kerry

Jennifer: 15 minute brainstorm about questions for us to help new members get a feel for our committee.

Tina: Also to talk about retreat ideas for next month I emailed a handful of you to fill out paperwork to continue with the group. Do that as soon as possible.

Nate: The opportunity to meet everyone in person, great getting to know people. More of an opportunity to connect.

Tina: The last bit of the agenda is the Massachusetts indigenous legislative piece we've been talking about. We unfortunately have to put it on hold. Katie said to pass info on to members of board and go from there. Not what we want to hear but I want to make sure we follow proper protocol.

Cynthia: It's better to go to select board members. Would like to see them understand it. We're advisors to them. It's a tricky process to get the town board to go along with it. I think it will be stronger for our town to have a process that makes us aware through the state group.

Tina: What we need to do to make an effective impact

Bud: Housing being a human right, I want to share the Greater Boston Housing Campaign, shares a quote about housing as a human right. Increasing the supply of housing outside of Boston, and preserving essential, neglected housing funding the state public housing initiative. Senator Garlic cosponsored a bill that'll help Needham housing be repaired and modified.

Tina: Will add to the agenda for May.

Reminders:

- Book Discussion on May 11- we're hosting.

Discussions of help with the book discussion

Marlene: Needham Observer - new local online paper

Race Amity Day and Pride Event Updates:

- Still in planning process in terms of a presenter
- Similar format
- Activities based on parent children interaction

- Sunday, June 18 2-4 pm
- Jesse Young-Paulson to communicate to high schoolers

Motion to adjourn:

Marlene motion

Tina second

All "yes"