

June 26, 2019

To: Friends of BCSH

I suspect from communications we've had in the past that you, like I, are concerned about hatred, and its destructive capacity.

I'm writing because I thought you might like to receive occasional emails from me about the new [Bard Center for the Study of Hate](#) (BCSH)<sup>li</sup>. There will only be a handful of such emails yearly. You can opt out at any time by clicking this [unsubscribe link](#).

Hate has been around for as long as people, and from time to time we have stark reminders of its destructive power: The Tree of Life Synagogue, the Chabad synagogue in Poway, Christchurch, the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka.

Sometimes hate is violent, but sometimes it is so normative we barely notice it – the “logical” identification and demonization of some “other,” a manifestation of how things “are.”

Hate continues to be one of the most vexing questions of the human condition. Pieces of the answer to this puzzle exist in various academic fields (neuroscience, psychology, history, religion, political science, sociology and many more), but they are frustratingly isolated. How does what we know about how the brain works on hate, for instance, inform our political choices?

Hate needs to be understood better in a multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary framework. Think of how such knowledge might help organizations that address hate (or one of its manifestations), providing new insights and even testable theories to guide their work.

BCSH is determined to pioneer a model of how a campus can marshal the brain power of students and faculty to think more deeply about hate and how to confront it. Our goal is to build a program that can be an inspiration to, and copied by, other academic institutions, just as schools of higher education have emulated other Bard projects, among them Bard's Human Rights Program and its Prison Initiative (which is the subject of an [upcoming PBS documentary](#)).

In just one semester of operation, here's some of what has been accomplished because of the enthusiasm of Bard faculty and students to wrestle intelligently with this subject:

#### FACULTY:

- 1) Over 40 faculty members, despite their busy schedules, asked to be part of a reading group that will start in the fall, to look at hate from multiple academic disciplines. They are eager to explore new ways to think about hate; doing so will help shape their teaching and research.

- 2) This fall BCSH is sharing [a list of 40 hate-related](#) classes being taught inside different disciplines to underscore the common emphasis, and to encourage students to examine hate from various perspectives
- 3) BCSH will support, financially and otherwise, the creation of new courses that look at hate directly.
- 4) Faculty members are already discussing new areas of hate-related research, including in political science and economics.
- 5) BCSH is taking over a project started by our friends at Gonzaga University, and will be compiling a database of syllabi about hate from professors around the world.

#### STUDENTS:

- 1) BCSH is supporting [internships for Bard students](#), working this summer as at NGOs focused on hate. In addition to their work for the NGOs, the students will research and write reports about how their NGOs think about hate, what scholarship they rely on, what additional research might be helpful in their work, etc.
- 2) BCSH is supporting [senior project research on hate](#), both with funds for things such as visiting archives, and by showcasing student work on campus.
- 3) In the fall, BCSH will be working with students to create other research and activist initiatives related to hate.

#### CAMPUS-WIDE PROGRAMS:

BCSH will also bring leading thinkers about hate to campus to speak with students and faculty throughout the academic year. So far in the fall we have scheduled Matt Taibbi, Bard alum and author of *Hate Inc.: How, and Why, the Media Makes Us Hate One Another*; Marc Weitzmann, author of *The Rising Tide of Antisemitism in France*; Jonathan Haidt, author of “The Coddling of The American Mind” and “The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion,”; and Richard A. Friedman MD, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, and New York Times contributor, author of “[The Neuroscience of Hate Speech](#).” If you’d like to attend any of these programs, we’d love to have you (email me for the details).

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to tell you some of what BCSH is doing and planning.

Please feel free to call or email me with any questions, concerns, or ideas. And if you know academics or others who might be interested in what BCSH is doing, or setting up hate studies programs of their own, please connect me with them.

With best regards,

Ken

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