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BCSH Summer Internship Report/Reflection

September 8th

This summer I was an intern with Eradicate Hate Global Summit. I'm incredibly grateful to the organization and to Bard for making this opportunity possible.

The Work

My focus for the majority of the 8 weeks consisted of creating and updating content related to the SCREENHate campaign, an Eradicate Hate Global Summit project focused on hate-based violence prevention by reaching parent and caregiver audiences. The website and instagram direct concerned parents/caregivers to prevention resources related to youth online radicalization and/or mobilization to violence. Additionally, I helped with UP End Hate social media content and attended bi-weekly Up End Hate group meetings and twice Weekly Eradicate Hate Global Summit Team meetings, and weekly intern sync meetings. Below are attachments to all social media content, website edits, and miscellaneous tasks I completed throughout the course of the internship.

- SCREEN Hate
  - Website updates & edit suggestions, see appendix 1
  - Instagram content July-September, see appendix 2
- Up End Hate
  - Instagram Content August & September, see appendix 3
- Miscellaneous tasks
  - Faith in Action data compilation, see appendix 4

○ Up End Reach Map for findings report, see appendix 5

The internship has allowed exposure and skill building related to content creation, particularly through the graphic design platform, canva, with which I created content for the SCREEN Hate and UP END Hate Instagrams. This work was focused on presenting key information from the websites and directing the audience to resources found on the websites. Visual/media literacy skills came heavily into play here, challenging me to communicate complex ideas and educate on taboo topics such as hate-based violence and extremism largely through one-liners, small paragraphs, and simple visuals.

I also became familiar with working remotely, spending long periods of time online, and pacing myself according to time and focus. This was a relatively new experience as I'm used to working hands-on jobs such as landscaping, restaurant service, and environmental education.

Challenges & Growth

Another aspect of the internship was the growth in my own knowledge related to the issues the organization is working to address. I have gained a multi-disciplinary understanding of hate-based violence prevention, having now spent long periods of time researching, reading, and editing resources related to radicalization, extremism, and clinical prevention approaches. I have a better understanding of how hate spreads online through platforms (messaging applications, social networking sites, gaming communication platforms, video platforms, etc.) and what hateful material can look like. Hateful materials show up in various forms including degrading or discriminatory language and/or symbols associated with hateful groups and events. It's particularly fascinating how people, especially young people, become susceptible to hate-fueled extremism based on demographics (age, gender, race) and risk factors. Research in clinical psychology has pinpointed particular risk factors, such as family and peer

group interactions, mental health, social isolation, time spent online, exposure to hateful materials and propaganda, recruitment in online hate groups, etc. There are numerous interpersonal, social, and structural factors that play key roles in online radicalization.

The internship not only expanded my knowledge on these topics but allowed a critical and inquisitive growth in my own conceptions of hate, violence, and politics. One thing that I spent a lot of time thinking about and grappling with was Eradicate Hate's goal to maintain an "apolitical" presence. The necessity of this became clear when considering the political climate, spaces, and audiences the organization collaborates with and wants to reach, in order to do the work they are doing. Something that I also came to understand, is that the multidisciplinary approach to violence prevention requires a certain inclusivity. It is different from "inclusivity" in the liberal sense. Most environments I've spent time in are considered progressive but tend to shut out or turn off people from other political backgrounds if they are not aligned with the progressive agenda. This alternative type of inclusivity can actually require a dampening of strong opinions related to justice, discrimination, and history with the intention of not alienating audiences that are not on the same page about highly divisive topics. By utilizing this strategy, such as not mentioning particular politically "leftist/progressive" opinions, words, or holidays, it is possible to reach a wider audience, meet on common ground, and create long-lasting and effective change. This is the lens with which I started seeing Eradicate Hates approaches.

As someone who has been thinking a lot about the political climate of the US and abroad in recent years, I have been extremely concerned about issues concerning political polarization. It seems as though people feel further and further removed from their political counterparts partly due to geographics, economic, racial, occupational/educational backgrounds, etc. Additionally, influences such as the news outlets and social media exacerbate these differences, making it very easy to find like minded pockets and stay nestled in them while casting aside empathy and understanding for people of other backgrounds and beliefs. I've had conversations with family and friends who I know to be kind-hearted people that have said things that have surprised me, expressing clear biases, stereotypes, and a lack of empathy (usually for republicans, or moderate dems), and I'm sure the same is true of many other people from varying

backgrounds. So, just as politics has the ability to bring people together and be a tool for organization and change, it can also divide and fuel resentment (or even hate). Eradicate Hate's tendencies not to express strong political beliefs and to actually turn towards all people of varying backgrounds was refreshing.

The fragility of an "apolitical" status also became clear in mid-July, as the organization underwent major funding cuts. Financial redirections in the Department of Homeland Security by the Trump administration stated "*The Department of Homeland Security is gutting dozens of partisan and wasteful grants that failed to counter terrorism threats, saving taxpayers $18.5 Million"*[1]. This action cut $851,836.13 from Eradicate Hate Global Summit justified under the language "DEI organization focused on silencing ideological opposition" as well as Kristi Noem's statement made in a Fox News article just two weeks earlier, stating; "Politicized NGOs like Eradicate Hate have been siphoning away taxpayer dollars for far too long."[2]. With extreme funding cuts due to supposed political leanings it became clear that the goal of existing as an "apolitical" space in an inherently politicized climate and economy is turbulent and difficult.

Hate

In the beginning of this summer internship we discussed the concept of hate, its origins, and scholarly research and terminologies related to the topic. One concept, first introduced to me in a migration/anthropology class last spring, has been stuck in my brain throughout the summer. This concept of "othering" derived in postcolonial theory, refers to the process of constructing a social "Other"—an

[1] "DHS Axes Wasteful, Misdirected Grants, Saves Taxpayers $18.5m: Homeland Security." *U.S. Department of Homeland Security*, www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/17/dhs-axes-wasteful-misdirected-grants-saves-taxpayers-185m. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

[2] Mizell, Preston, and Fox News. "Noem Uncovers and Kills Multimillion-Dollar, Biden-Era Dei, LGBTQ Program." *Fox News*, FOX News Network, www.foxnews.com/politics/noem-uncovers-kills-multimillion-dollar-biden-era-dei-lgbtq-program. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

individual or group—as fundamentally different from and inferior to a dominant norm or "Self". [3] It is heavily related to, or perhaps even the same as the psychological phenomenon we discussed known as the "Us vs Them" effect.

As we discussed, on the Neurological/Biological Level, the Insular Cortex is the part of the brain that plays out the "Us vs Them" effect due to its role in emotional regulation and the experience of empathy. According to professor Robert Sapolsky, a Biology professor at Stanford University, this is the part of the brain integral to the construction of in-groups and -out groups catalyzing the "Us vs Them Effect".[4] On a biological level human brains are hardwired to us/them dichotomies. This makes the human brain, and entire populations of people especially susceptible to propaganda– which can breed hate and nationalist and extremist ideologies, giving way to acts of violence and in some cases, genocide.

The human urge to categorize, find patterns, and over simplify, is often based on association, emotion, and past experience (especially fear and/or trauma). It is dangerous to perpetuate us/them thinking through binary in & out-groups. It lays out the groundwork for the dehumanization of others. In many historical contexts dehumanization through speech and media has been used as a tactic of nationalism and ethnic cleansing. An example of this is antisemitic propaganda designed and perpetuated by the Nazi party, describing Jews as subhuman creatures through language related to monsters, parasites, and vermin in Germany in the 1920s-40s. It was a systemic promotion of certain ideas, practices, and censorship of media, not unlike what the US is seeing today in relation to immigrants/ illegals/ aliens/ criminals. Dehumanization is powerful.

Two major extreme examples of othering and formation of in and out-groups can be seen in the relationships between European settlers and Indigenous cultures in the US, labeling of indigenous peoples as savages in order to justify violence and stolen land, and the enslavement of Africans, categorized as property, similar to livestock, and treated as such. These are not light examples but I believe they are

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[3] *(PDF) Postcolonial "Otherness,"* www.researchgate.net/publication/369322429_POSTCOLONIAL_OTHERNESS. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

[4] *YouTube*, YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=14XSzWT4vI0. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

linked to the same fundamental psychological impulse which people have used to justify committing or submitting to heinous political and moral crimes. It seems as though Us vs them, othering, propaganda, and hate, have historically played and continue to play a major role in the justification of colonialism. Often linked to religious pretense arguments, for example manifest destiny (Protestant Christianity) or the State of Israel (through the eyes of Zionism), the "otherness" of certain groups can be used in political social matters to morally permit the occupation of land, along with its "holy" justification. In such cases, the "religiously in the right / in-group /us" gain access— usually through violence and force—to the land that the "out-group/ them" is currently residing on, while financially and materially profiting/benefitting from the act.

The use of tactics such as dehumanization, misleading language, censorship, and the extortion of historical trauma, particularly in media and news outlets also plays into garnering support in the nation and abroad amounting to foreign powers/constituencies.

Extended

One thought that continued to sit with me throughout the internship was:
How can an organization claim to fight hate a-politically while still censoring themselves in order to fit the mold of donors' and stakeholder's personal politics and expectations?

For example, the assertion that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza is a politically heated/debated/denied topic in current US politics. I would argue that however politically heated, there is hate-based-violence occurring in Gaza and the West Bank because there are clear ethnic and religious motivators in the tendencies of the violence. The complete avoidance of touching on the subject or

anything related to the subject makes sense considering the history of the organization. It was born in the aftermath of the Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, where shock, loss, and the reopening of wounds (like with every antisemitic attack) allowed for financial currents towards change. Many of these donor organizations and or individuals have Israeli political ties and/or Zionist ideological tendencies and I'm sure would not appreciate critical or even any commentary on certain current events. That leaves the organization with an inherent bias and skillset that is focused on education and prevention of only certain issues, in particular, issues related to antisemitism.

The term "antisemitism" has also shown complicated political uses in recent months. It seems to be politically weaponized. A deliberate misuse of the label in relation to an organization or individual immediately associates those accused with the weight, trauma, and history that it carries. Even if the accusation is untrue the association may stay and can have dire financial and other consequences. An example of this can be seen in various federal funding cuts made by the Trump administration to universities.[5]

It is also noteworthy to mention the anti-Arab/anti-Muslim sentiments in the US are not new and can be made sense of by examining "us vs them" groundwork laid out post 9/11. In the aftermath of 9/11, the traumatized nation was easily susceptible to the conservative anti-immigration agendas of following decades, while strong Muslim-terrorist ties, such as the extremist group Hamas, continues to feed into racist associations and narratives in the media and politics.

I wish that addressing hate for the Eradicate Hate Global Summit could mean addressing both antisemitism while simultaneously addressing anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab forms of hate. Unfortunately, because of these relationships— which I can't describe in any way other than a complex web consisting of

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[5] *Trump Administration Cuts UCLA Funding over Claims of Antisemitism, Chancellor Says - The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2025/08/01/us/politics/trump-cuts-ucla-funding-federal-research.html. Accessed 27 Aug. 2025.

history, politics, trauma, propaganda, and economic/resource/land interests– that type of work seems to be rather unusual.

On campuses, it feels like there is an all or nothing mentality on divisive political topics such as Israel/Palestine. Especially in academic settings, I hope that people find the courage to rise above strong emotions that tend to create rifts instead of building bridges of understanding. Maybe the solution requires a completely different approach on a psychological level.

People need to be open to thinking less in binaries and need to be able to question their own standpoints and those of others in their in-groups. Engagement in meaningful discussions, and intellectual thinking into the complexities of conflicts with people from "out-groups" could go a long way. Also, as we discussed, humans belong to multiple groups, and have the capacity for multi-identities. This human condition can be harnessed to construct/expand "Us" identities to differently/more inclusive in-groups.

These ideas give me hope for fighting against hate. At the end of the day, this kind of work is in fact not about hate, but the opposite. It's focused on bringing more love and care and communication into the world by making them accessible, even to people who've fallen down the hate rabbit hole.

Appendix

1. https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2025/09/SCREEN_Hate_Edits-1.pdf

2. https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2025/09/InstagramCalendar_SCREENHate-Sheet1-1-1.pdf

3. https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2025/09/Up-End-Hate-Content-Sheet1-1.pdf

4. https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2025/09/Faith-in-Action_-blurred-SWOT-Analysis-1.pdf

5. https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2025/09/UpEnd-Hate-Reach-Data-Sheet.pdf