Checklist for Organizations Working against Hate, and Their Supporters
from
SIMPLY HUMAN: A Guide to Understanding and Combating Hate
(University of Toronto Press, Bard Center for the Study of Hate)

- ☐ Think about what you mean by "hate." Define how you are conceptualizing hate, including what it is and what it is not, and reflect on how you use the term. (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Think about what you choose to do, or not do, and be able to articulate why you believe an action, or inaction, will not make things worse. (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Engage in and nurture open and intentional deliberation about the moral and ethical implications of what you choose to do, or not do, and how those choices will affect how successful you may be in the short term and long term (e.g., maintaining credibility, accurately representing attitudes or actions/events). (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Create space for reflection and discussion. Support an openness to questioning, corrections or alternative possibilities, and a commitment to truthfulness and trustworthiness – honesty, transparency, accountability. (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Reflect on how your organization is embodying or exemplifying its values in its practices. Periodically consider whether your passionate commitment against hate might be transforming into a vice of "moral obsession," and if it does, the implications thereof. (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Support staff to prevent and mitigate harm: working against hate can be taxing, all consuming, and pose risk. Engage in open and intentional conversation on implications and limits for engaging in this work (which is not finite and will always be required) and how to manage emotions, avert burnout, and attend to safety, security, and well-being. (Brudholm & Johansen)
- ☐ Understand (and leverage) that "us" vs. "them" is deeply hard wired in our brains: While there is "a basic human aversion to physically harming others," hatred can be a shared and unifying experience. The need to belong is a fundamental human motivation, as is the need to contribute. (Galván)
- ☐ Remember that hateful behavior can be experienced as rewarding and may help build a sense of community, that people are contributing to, or defending, their own group – and this is also true for those who hate the hate they are opposing. (Galván)
- ☐ Provide opportunities for greater exposure and meaningful interaction with members of outgroups and facilitate rehumanization. (Galván)
- ☐ Think about the differences between anger and hate – anger can

potentially motivate constructive intergroup behavior, whereas hate almost always leads to destructive behavior. (Li)

- ☐ Address (or at least take into account) the unique characteristics and multi-layered antecedents of hate in devising approaches to combat hate: hate-motivated actions are informed by a range of factors including intergroup context, history, narrative, norms, and so on. (Li)
- ☐ Recall that hate, in moral and cognitive terms, means that the target is incapable of change, and thus the motivation of hate is not merely to harm the outgroup, but to remove the outgroup's members from the ingroup's social and physical environment. (Li)
- ☐ Think about other negative intergroup emotions and sentiments. Consider limitations and therefore risks of traditional psychological interventions (e.g., prejudice-reduction interventions). (Li)
- ☐ Consider structural factors such as systemic injustices, oppression, and victimization when addressing group-based hate. While there is some evidence that promoting a common ingroup identity, facilitating positive intergroup contact, and fostering perspective-taking with an outgroup MAY reduce prejudice and negative intergroup emotions, it is ambiguous how effective these interventions are in mitigating hate. The interventions may be ineffective for a number of reasons, including the lack of consideration for structural factors. (Li)
- ☐ Recall that high levels of identification with an ingroup (including the NGO's ingroup) can lower the threshold for perceiving collective threats, and that identifying with your ingroup in a glorifying and exclusionary manner can have destructive consequences. (Li)
- ☐ Partner with researchers to test real-world effectiveness of psychological interventions: this empirical research on hate is lacking. Research should consider both macro- and micro-level processes in tandem. (Li)
- ☐ Prioritize targeting social norms, as this can be more effective than targeting individual beliefs: Understand that social norms and conflict narratives (e.g., shifting a narrative about an "outgroup") can directly influence behavior, independent of personal beliefs and attitudes. Promoting inclusive identities can challenge the rigid categorization of groups as good versus bad or us versus them, resulting in important attitudinal changes necessary for reducing hate. (Li)
- ☐ Use multidirectional memory framework to support communities affected by hate to seek out points of connection with others, while simultaneously acknowledging differences. (Levin)

- ☐ Recall that hate is frequently associated with how a group's memory of the past functions; memory isn't static and is more a reflection of current communal and political needs. It also intersects with and is informed by other groups' memories. New events can change how those memories work. However, when groups can find a way to see a parallel between their memories, while recognizing that not all forms of hate are the same and cannot be compared or "competed," new possibilities open for solidarity and can lead to joint action against hate. (Levin)
- ☐ Where possible collaborate with the media industry to leverage parasocial interaction – one-way mediated relationships fostering connections akin to friendship – for behavior change, modeling healthy conflict, and offering a variety of alternative points of view: Cast a lead spokesperson/actor that creates a sense of commonality with the audience (think mothers, sports fans, foodies). Telling a good human-centered story that audiences will lean into and listen to can impart lessons without a clearly stated "call-to-action." (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ It is important to inform any media through use of research of audiences' perspectives and ongoing evaluation of audience response with an activated feedback loop, as it is more difficult than ever to understand different points of view and easy to make false assumptions. (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ Establish trusting relationships with stakeholders and influencers within media industry through the common ground of storytelling rather than advocacy: Engage individuals from impacted communities who identify as and opt in as storytellers. Create spaces that foster open dialogue. (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ Consider how parasocial interaction can be implemented to strengthen other NGO narrative interventions across media (e.g., social media, TV, radio/podcasting, etc.). (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ Build a culture of continuous evaluation, and make that a task for the whole agency as a collective responsibility. (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ Acknowledge and share information about mistakes and failures in order to move the field forward. (Lowe & Jimenez)
- ☐ Complement the moral case against hate with analysis of the cost of hate and discrimination for individuals and economies. While economic arguments cannot replace the moral case against hate, framing inclusion as profitable and exclusion or hatred as costly leverages financial motivations and can lead to change in attitudes, unanticipated allyship, and inform and support policy and legislative advocacy (pivoting from us-them to win-win). (Badgett)
- ☐ Work with economic research and economists to fully understand

technical details of economic arguments and/or expand issues related to hate that have an economic angle. Consider new ways to quantify the effects of hatred. (Badgett)

- ☐ Help educate the public on definitions of hate, hate crime laws, and hate crime reporting: Effectiveness of hate crime laws hinges on public awareness and understanding of what hate crime is, the existence of laws, and the importance of reporting. (Schweppe & Walters)
- ☐ Ensure victims of hate have accessible and reliable means to report incidents to the police, and ensure criminal justice agencies are ready and receptive: Reporting can include anonymous online reporting and third-party reporting processes, typically run by expert CSOs/NGOs that monitor cases, support victims, and also support training of criminal justice agencies on the impacts of hate crime and identifying evidence to prove hate motivation. (Schweppe & Walters)
- ☐ Recognize and address prejudice within institutions, particularly criminal justice institutions, as a means of promoting access to justice for victims of hate. (Schweppe & Walters)
- ☐ Help establish multiagency partnerships and advisory groups that engage CSOs/NGOs with policy makers and legislators in the development (and continued reform) of national/state strategies, holistic and resourced action plans, justice interventions, and education campaigns. Multiagency advisory groups require mechanisms to hold policy makers to account for implementing agreed targets, approaches, and measures. States/locales will also require the necessary logistics or resourcing to facilitate multiagency partnerships. Recognize that there cannot be an overreliance on CSO partners to deliver services (e.g., monitoring cases and supporting victims) without adequate funding/resourcing. (Schweppe & Walters)
- ☐ Consider exploring the potential opportunity for alternative justice mechanisms in supporting needs of victims and reducing recidivism, although be aware of the possible difficulties. (Schweppe & Walters)
- ☐ Consider how conspiracy theories may contribute to hate and fuel an "us" vs. "them" narrative. Conspiracy theories are proposed explanations of events and circumstances that place blame on the secretive actions of a supposedly powerful and evil outgroup. The outgroup can take the form of government institutions, political parties, ideological factions, or racial, religious, and ethnic groups. (Uscinski)
- ☐ NGOs should focus on the conspiracy theories most likely to be intertwined with, and express, hatred of outgroups most vulnerable to harassment or violence. (Uscinski)

- ☐ Note that most conspiracy theories, as well as the beliefs in them, appear to be relatively harmless. However, when conspiracy theories scapegoat groups like racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, those conspiracy theories can form a perfect storm, combining (1) accusations that serve as a call to action, (2) potential believers prone to antisocial thought patterns and behaviors, and (3) marginalized and vulnerable targets. (Uscinski)
- ☐ Warn those who may be exposed to conspiracy theories that they will be exposed: Advance warning – which also informs the general public and is called "prebunking" – can lead people to resist persuasive influence upon exposure. (Uscinski)
- ☐ "Truth" of an idea and evidence are not determinative of beliefs. Using evidence or argument to change someone's mind about a conspiracy theory has had mixed results and can backfire: evidence and argument *from trusted sources* is more important. Ridicule to combat conspiratorial belief has not been tested widely and can also result in significant negative consequences. Cult deprogramming techniques are likely not cost effective and may be unethical, and there is no clear evidence that such strategies work. (Uscinski)
- ☐ People require more evidence to believe that their ingroup has conspired against others than they do to believe that an outgroup has conspired against others. High profile elites can make a conspiracy theory salient enough to motivate behaviors and these voices are difficult to compete with. (Uscinski)
- ☐ Focus on the use of "counterspeech" to influence audiences holding relatively moderate views and/or support those targeted by hateful speech with services, accurate messages, and solidarity; counterspeech can be used as both a reply to an instance of hateful speech and also as a way to create an overall less hateful cultural norm. (Buerger)
- ☐ Counterspeech avoids the temptation toward calls for censorship and the attendant problems of sacrificing free speech principles. (Buerger)
- ☐ Consider "Project Lemonade" approaches that turn the hater's agenda on its head. This is done by piggybacking on the hater's activities to rally opposition toward an alternate goal – creating visibility of the hate and having the hater in effect raise funds to support an initiative fighting hate. (Buerger)
- ☐ Humor can be an effective ingredient of counterspeech. (Buerger)
- ☐ Use counterspeech carefully: Use your organizational platform to amplify voices of experts and counterspeakers. Understand and prepare for the potential for backlash. Seek new models for evaluating the impact of these efforts. (Buerger)

- ☐ Consider the implications of how the philanthropic structure implicates how your group functions. (Berman)
- ☐ Support transparency of philanthropy, as lack of transparency allows funding of hate (although be aware of the dangers to rights of association and problems such as doxing). (Berman)
- ☐ Explore how policy reform, for example requiring DAF spendouts or placing stricter regulations on companies that hold charitable funds, could limit the possibilities for philanthropic dollars to flow toward organizations/agendas associated with hate groups. (Berman)
- ☐ Consider unintended consequences and limitations of any regulation, as regulation may be wielded as a weapon as much as a safeguard for public good. (Berman)
- ☐ Attend to organizational values, culture, and practices to support learning, including evaluation. (Houvras)
- ☐ Recognize that addressing hate is not linear and requires ongoing and iterative reflection, learning, and evaluation. Reflect on organizational values and reprioritize multiple evaluation-related obligations and accountabilities, centering those who are affected by hate. Establish inclusive learning partnerships, nurture learning culture, develop conceptual clarity for your theory while maintaining flexibility to experiment and adapt strategies, and collectively identify and advance learning questions that are meaningful and actionable. (Houvras)
- ☐ Challenge assumptions or biases by facilitating dialogues where some staff are intentionally requested to engage as the "devil's advocate," and/or bring in substantive experts who hold lived experience and/or understanding of relevant research. (Houvras)
- ☐ Document and contribute your learning externally on what has worked, what hasn't, and where risks lie: Nearly all of the chapters in this volume indicate limitations on evidence and a need for more real-world evaluation. While context and culture must inform design of strategy and use of any tactic, recognizing effects in other contexts may serve to inform and avoid unintended consequences. (Houvras)

For more information, including for our training program, contact

Kenneth S. Stern
Director
Bard Center for the Study of Hate
kstern@bard.edu
bcsh.bard.edu

Bard | CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HATE