

May 21, 2025

Mr. Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director, Anti-Defamation League
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Re: Complacency and Complicity

Dear Jonathan:

After serving several decades as a board member of ADL's Philadelphia Regional Office, I have come to the sad conclusion that I must submit my resignation. This letter is to explain why.

In 2022 you published an excellent book, *IT COULD HAPPEN HERE - Why America Is Tipping from Hate to the Unthinkable—And How We Can Stop It*. Your book courageously espoused the importance of immediate action to speak out against intolerance and discrimination. It detailed the strategic bond of allyship and warned of the danger of silence. The ADL is failing to live up to these precepts.

Your book outlines categories of action for the ADL to fight in the public sphere to protect Jews and democratic values in America. These include voting rights, rule of law, censorship, and immigration rights. In all four areas, ADL has now abrogated these responsibilities, failing to speak out, and thereby being complicit in great damage to the American republic.

Let's begin with ADL's mission statement: "To stop the defamation of the Jewish people **and** to secure justice and fair treatment to all." (p. 3¹, emphasis supplied). You wrote about this "intersectional commitment," noting that, "I'm proud that we've long stood up against all kinds of hatred, not just anti-semitism." (p. 140). You boast, "I've intensified our commitment in recent years to taking a leadership role in the fight against not just anti-semitism but also racism, anti-immigrant xenophobia, and other forms of hatred" (p. 141) because "[t]he founders of ADL believed in the simple but powerful premise that America could not be safe for its Jews unless it was safe for all its people." (p. 4).

¹ All page citations are to your book.

Yet, in the past four months, the ADL has failed to stand up against the spread of hatred, the erosion of the rule of law, and the threat of authoritarianism. The ADL, “a vaunted civil rights organization, literally an American institution (p. 230),” is virtually silent when it is most needed.

Voting Rights

You properly recognized that “...support for voting rights is a critical element in the fight against hate and bigotry.” (p. 211). You noted that “...the very premise of these [voter suppression bills]—that widespread fraud had taken place in 2020 and that the Democrats had ‘stolen’ the election from Donald Trump—was a complete fiction, the stuff of vile conspiracy theories and disinformation.” (pp 210-211).

You observed that, “[Blacks] have a harder time... voting, especially as lawmakers make it even more restrictive through laws that by all measures are designed to disenfranchise Black voters.” (p. 45). Citing Professor Tim Snyder, “...the recent spate of voter suppression laws [are] so clearly designed to disenfranchise voters of color...” (p. 123).

You proclaimed that, “Regardless of party, we should reject restrictive voting laws as not only unjust but dangerous, a pathway to tyranny.” (p. 212). Yet, an [executive order](#) and the [Safeguard American Voter Eligibility \(SAVE\) Act](#) do exactly what you warn against – and there has been barely a peep from ADL. Why the silence?

First they came for voting rights, but the ADL did not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Rule of Law

You wrote: “The attack on the Capitol Building and attempted coup on January 6th, 2021, was a wakeup call to the imminent threat posed by Far Right extremists and their hateful ideology, a threat not just to Americans but to proponents of liberal democracy around the world.” (p. 8). Indeed, on January 8, 2021, the ADL [called for the removal of President Donald Trump from office, either by the means afforded by the U.S. Constitution or through his own](#)

[resignation](#). You recognized that on January 6, 2021, “Racism, antisemitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and so many other forms of hate were on full display as extremists perpetrated violence and sedition. We must root out this evil if we are ever to heal as a nation.” Yet, when Donald Trump pardoned the insurrectionists who killed and maimed law enforcement officers and who desecrated our Capital building, ADL only issued a tepid posting on [Instagram](#).

You wrote, “[Professor Gregory] Stanton further likens the big lie of Trump’s election victory to Hitler’s claim that Jews and other civilians betrayed Germany during World War I, causing it to lose the war.” (p. 120). Yet, the repeated fiction that Trump won the 2020 election goes unanswered by ADL.

You wrote that “[Abraham] Lincoln dismissed the idea that a foreign power could stamp out American democracy. But there was another danger worth ruminating over: Americans themselves.” You recognized the danger posed by the “...disregard for the rule of law, ‘the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of the sober judgment of the Courts.’” You foresaw that “... Donald Trump's presidency and the January 6th insurrection make Lincoln's words seem especially prescient.” (p. 115). But the ADL is mum.

Then they came for the rule of law and the disregard for Court orders, but the ADL failed to speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Censorship

You observed that, “Institutionalized racism in all its forms has shaped experiences and outcomes across society in ways too numerous to mention. We thus must aim to teach the full history of our nation and achieve a degree of truth and reconciliation, even if it is hard and pushes people to give up some amount of privilege.” (p. 182). Yet when an [executive order](#) is issued leading to the purging of our nation’s history and the banning of books, the ADL is silent. Don’t you realize that if your book had been on the shelves of the [U.S. Naval Academy](#), it would have been removed? And now, if an employer or school or government agency even *discusses* institutional racism, it is viewed as unlawful by our government and this makes it a target for retaliation.

Then they came for the books and to rewrite American history, but the ADL did not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Xenophobia

You wrote, “Nobody would have thought that in America, the government would tear infants from the arms of their immigrant parents and ship them across the country or lock them up in camps or both.” (p. 11). And: “Will we see undocumented minorities interned in detention centers on our borders?” (p. 115-116). Yet, Congress is considering spending [\\$45 billion for deportation camps](#). Every day, families are being torn apart – and even worse. What you condemned in 2022 is happening now in America with the added abomination of the illegal detention of people sent to “black site” gulags in countries where they know nobody and do not speak the language, without due process. Yet, the ADL is virtually silent.

Then they built the deportation camps and mobilized the US military, but the ADL did not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

You stated, “As a neophyte politician, Trump made hate a key element of his pitch to voters; later, it was central to his governing style.” (p. 8). Has anything changed to dispel this?

You penned, ““Every hostile tweet, every offensive speech, every coarse comment fanned the flames of hate. And the press breathlessly repeated his hateful messages, allowing intolerance to spread through social media virtually unchecked. Extremists took advantage of the political cover Trump offered them not just to commit acts of violence but to enter the political discourse, further normalizing hate.” (p. 8). Has anything gotten better?

You communicated, “It's hard to underestimate the organizational boost that white supremacists, anti-immigrant groups, neo-Nazis, white nationalists, and others received during the Trump years, when their ideology was tolerated and sometimes openly encouraged by officials at the highest levels (p. 27)”... recognizing the “innumerable other racist comments he [Trump] made and dog whistles he sent during his presidency.... (p. 164). Hasn't this continued with alacrity?

So, why this new supine ADL posture? Is it because the president rightly has [condemned](#) antisemitism? But, at what cost? As leverage to destroy America's great universities because they are places of learning and free thinking? To silence legitimate dissent and to invoke fear? Isn't this the first chapter in the authoritarian playbook?

Or are you now silent because the sentiments in your book, if remembered, would elicit retaliation against you and the ADL? If so, doesn't it prove that free speech has been suppressed? A clear sign authoritarianism is on the move? Is the ADL really willing to be used as a pawn, as the cover for hatred, oppression and the diminution of human rights?

Now, maybe you think that I am overreacting – and I pray that I am.

But the Trump administration already has stopped the flow of money to Harvard University and threatened its nonprofit status. Again, the ADL's reaction was lukewarm at best, published in the [Times of Israel](#). Trump is using the threat of pulling 501(c)(3) status as another weapon in the arsenal to destroy democracy? As if the federales even care anymore that their actions need to be lawful.

Don't you remember writing, "When a political leader, especially one with the tremendous reach and influence of President Trump, not only fails to condemn hate but actively encourages it, the entire tone of our nation's discourse shifts. Extremists become emboldened, hateful ideology spreads, and society becomes far more susceptible to violence."? (p. 164).

Didn't you say: "Staffers issued press credentials to Holocaust-denying media outlets." (p. 28). "And this is to say nothing of the actions that Trump and other political leaders have taken to spread and legitimize white-supremacist ideas, whether that entailed credentialing white-supremacist media from the White House Press Office or repeating their rhetoric in official statements." (p. 49). Hello. It happened again. ADL turns a blind eye.

Do you still subscribe to this view?: "A toxic combination of social media and demagoguery... [results in a] subtle but pervasive normalization of hate, made worse by political leaders who disseminate ideas that were formerly beyond the

pale, affirming their validity, or who remain silent, giving others an excuse not to step up and correct hateful rhetoric (p. 31).” Where is ADL when that hateful rhetoric should be forcefully counteracted, denounced, repudiated? Where?

Is this the dystopian future that ADL is enabling?

Then they pulled the licenses from broadcasters, but the ADL will not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Then, they declared people dead, but the ADL did not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Then, they electronically “murdered” people by removing their existence from governmental records, but the ADL will not speak out because it did not directly deal with antisemitism.

Not only could it happen here, Jonathan, it *IS* happening here. As the zone is being flooded, the vaunted ADL has unfortunately joined the bucket brigade.

Did you mean it when you wrote: “I feel compelled to do everything in my power to stop the unthinkable from happening. We must all realize how close we are to widespread violence and the disintegration of democracy and civilized society.” (p. 16). “Our society might be teetering on the edge, but there's still time to stand up for the peaceful, democratic society we want to gift to our children and grandchildren.” (p. 39). If so, why are you not standing up now?

At this rate, the ADL will invariably give an award to Trump for being the GREATEST fighter against antisemitism and for doing more for American Jews than anyone ever? (After all, Trump did more for [Blacks with the possible exception of President Lincoln.](#))

Before it is too late, please fulfill ADL’s historic mission to fight for civil rights and to stand up for what’s right while there is still time.

Read your damn book.

With great sadness,

Steven K. Ludwig

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