

NASW-NYC and NASW-NYS Condemn Mass Shooting at Tree of Life Congregation and Recent Hate-Fueled Attacks

The National Association of Social Workers – New York City (NASW-NYC) and New York State (NASW-NYS) Chapters strongly condemn the string of recent hate-fueled attacks in the United States including the horrific shooting at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh; the attempted attacks on George Soros, former President Barack Obama, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, Representative Maxine Waters, Senator Kamala Harris, and other prominent political figures; and the attempted assault on a predominantly African-American church that ended in the deaths of two people in a grocery store in Louisville. We, like so many others, are heartbroken and disturbed by these recent senseless acts of violence and offer our most heartfelt condolences to the families and communities affected by these events.

Antisemitism, hate, and xenophobia should have no place in the United States, and yet far too often we hear and read headlines about mass shootings, discrimination, and assault. These acts of violence and domestic terrorism do not happen overnight, and they do not occur in isolation. Our nation needs to seriously address the longstanding undercurrent of racism and bigotry that flows far and wide. While some progress has been made, we continue to see rhetoric of antagonism and hate toward groups of people manifest itself on bumper stickers, on social media, and media sources that embolden people to call authorities on innocent people of color, send dangerous and lethal bombs to people of differing political beliefs, and kill 11 people who were joined in community to celebrate the life of a little child.

These expressions are the antithesis of who we are as a people and counter to core principles of our social work profession, which is driven by respect and inclusion. The United States' history as a nation of immigrants is its unique strength. Diversity is the backbone of our country, and it is something that should be celebrated – not demonized. As social workers, we recognize the strengths that exist in all cultures and work to prevent and eliminate any oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, political belief, religion, immigration status, and/or mental or physical ability. Our nation is advanced and strong because our people are unique and strong as well.

This public hatred of all groups must stop, and we must find ways to unite as one nation where diverse ideas, groups, and perspectives are respected. We cannot tolerate, facilitate, nor

collaborate with any form of discrimination, and we must speak out loudly against any public expressions of hatred or prejudice no matter who the target is. We must also increase our support of people who experience marginalization of any kind, so that they do not use their anger and aggression to destroy the principles that allow people to speak and act freely in our country. Our profession must focus to mobilize legislators, stakeholders, and the community to advocate for laws and stronger regulations that would serve as deterrents to acts of violence and terrorism, and to reduce gun-related deaths and injuries through honest dialogue and sensible gun reform that keeps dangerous weapons out of the wrong hands.

All of us share the responsibility to make our country a safe and inclusive place to work, learn, play, and live. We have seen a significant increase of deliberate acts of discrimination and hate toward specific population groups, as well as incidents of school bullying and violence. [NASW-NYC and NASW-NYS will continue to advocate passage of a bill in New York](#) that would require every school district to provide their students with a school social worker to assist with the students' mental health and help ameliorate the multilayered challenges that young people may face – especially those living in communities in distress. Increasing the number of social workers available in our communities, including our schools, is a critical component of early intervention to prevent problems later in life, minimize the risk of gun-related deaths, and address trauma when it occurs in our communities.

At such a painful and traumatizing time, our profession must remain unified and committed to the prevention of violence. These acts of hatred serve to split our nation apart and must not become the new normal. Together, we can stand strong, work toward healing, and advocate for greater change that benefits individuals of all backgrounds. NASW-NYC and NASW-NYS stand ready to offer support in any way we can.



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