

Faith & Ethnic Communities Stand Together Against Acts of Intimidation and Hate
November 17, 2016

Indiana is currently experiencing a rising tide of hateful rhetoric and actions. Swastikas and other symbols of antisemitism are appearing across the state. Latino children are brought to tears by the cruel taunts of classmates demanding they be forced out of the country. St. David's Episcopal Church in Bean Blossom was defiled by anti-gay graffiti. Muslim women endure crude jeers because they cover their heads with hijabs, while nearly all Muslims feel anxious about being targeted. Racist insults such as "Black lives don't matter" are being spray-painted at schools. Acts like this are meant to terrorize entire communities, and the list is growing every day.

We will not allow this climate of intimidation and intolerance to become the "new normal" in our state. More than simply condemning the words and acts of bigotry, we commit to standing alongside one another, to standing up for one another, and to working together to support frightened Hoosiers.

Although our political views may differ, we can all agree that children shouldn't live in daily fear that their families will be torn apart. Although our religious traditions may differ, we can all agree that no group should feel threatened for practicing their faith. Although we have may have different ethnic backgrounds, we can all agree that racism diminishes the quality of life for everyone in the community.

It is incumbent upon every Hoosier to model behavior worth emulating by our children: that when we see intolerance or hatred directed toward anyone, we make our voice for peace and respect one that echoes loudly over the voices of hatred.

It may feel like religious, political, cultural, and ethnic differences are tearing at the fabric of who we are as a nation. We disagree. Our differences can – and do – make us stronger as a community and better as individuals.

We invite all Hoosiers to join us in standing against intimidation and hatred. A first practical step in doing this is starting a respectful conversation with – and listening to – someone who may be different from you. If we all do this, then we will be building the bridges of understanding among us, and over the seeming divides.

Marlene Arellano Dotson, president and CEO of the Indiana Latino Institute
Tony Mason, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Urban League
Lindsey Mintz, executive director of the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council
Terri Morris Downs, executive director of the Immigrant Welcome Center
Jason Nolan-Doerr, executive director of Indy Pride
Rima Shahid, executive director of the Muslim Alliance of Indiana
Glenn Tebbe, executive director of Indiana Catholic Conference
Charlie Wiles, executive director of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation

For a complete list of signatories, visit www.centerforinterfaithcooperation.org