

FAITH
IN PUBLIC LIFE

Rapid Response: Promoting Peace in a Climate of Violence





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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:

PHONE/TEXTING TREE:

My first call will be to: _____
cell: _____

My second call will be to: _____
cell: _____

My third call will be to: _____
cell: _____



In dangerous times, faith leaders who recognize the warning signs of targeted violence are critical builders of peace and preventers of tragedy. Thank you for stepping forward into this important role.

From Muslim communities in Rwanda to diverse interfaith coalitions in Charlottesville, we have seen time and time again that preparation and organizing make the difference between life and death. That's why Faith in Public Life has created this resource for you.

It is intended as an on-the-shelf crisis preparation and response plan tailored to your local context. We are very grateful to Rachel Brown and Samantha Owens of Over Zero for their input on this guide and leadership in our training on countering the language of violence.

As discussed in our training, rapid-response is an ongoing process. By mapping out who you'll contact and what you'll do at moments of tragedy – and what you need to do on an ongoing basis to be ready – you lay the strategic and practical groundwork that will equip you to act decisively and effectively at very difficult moments.

When diverse faith communities come together, we humanize one another in a way that the forces of hate and division cannot undo. United in shared values and common commitments, we can ensure that the power of peace prevails over the language of violence.

In faith,

Dan Nejfelt

Dan Nejfelt

A diverse group of people, including religious leaders, walking together in a procession. In the foreground, a man in a purple clerical vestment and a woman in a blue top and white stole are walking. They are surrounded by other people, some in religious attire, in what appears to be a public space.

Communication and Narratives:

IDEAS AND NARRATIVES THAT CAN INCREASE THE RISK OF VIOLENCE

Drawing on the work of Jonathan Leader Maynard

- **Dehumanization:** Portraying a group as less than human – for example, through comparisons to animals or machines.
- **Threat construction:** Creating the perception that another group poses a threat to our own group's way of life or physical existence.
- **Collective guilt attribution:** Holding an entire group responsible for abuses allegedly committed by individuals within the group.
- **Destruction of alternatives:** "Violence is the only option – we have no choice."
- **Virtue talk:** Highly valuing traits, characteristics, and actions associated with violence (e.g., ruthlessness), and devaluing those associated with peace (e.g., compassion, mercy).
- **Future bias:** Portraying violence as necessary for a safe and good future.



PREVENTING VIOLENCE

- **Understand why dangerous speech resonates.** Seek to understand your audience's identities, emotions, social pressures, and view of the world.
- **Anticipation:** Recognize the signs that the conditions for violence are developing.
- **Preparation:** Prepare your community for positive action. Set the expectation that not participating in violence is part of what it means to be a member of your community.
- **Leadership networking:** Establish strong relationships across faith lines, so you can stand together and humanize each other's communities when violence is about to break out.
- **Communication across multiple mediums:** Use all mediums available to you to convey these messages. Sermons, social media, community dialogues and panels, newsletters, podcasts, everyday conversations, op-eds, and media interviews all present valuable opportunities.



Dangerous Speech:

Dangerous speech that is emerging and resonating locally

(e.g., “WABC morning radio call-ins show pattern of threat construction and dehumanization of Muslims”)

Narrative: _____

Messengers: _____

Targeted populations: _____

Narrative: _____

Messengers: _____

Targeted populations: _____

Narrative: _____

Messengers: _____

Targeted populations: _____

Language of Peace

Narratives we will use on an ongoing basis to prevent group targeted violence (e.g., “We are all Floridians” will be our overarching message)

Narrative 1: _____

Narrative 2: _____



Potential Violence-Triggering Events

Descriptions of likely local scenarios that spark violence (e.g., "high profile violent crime by undocumented immigrant leads to ethnic targeting of Latino church")

ONGOING STEPS

Things to be done on an ongoing basis to ensure readiness and to prevent violence.
(e.g., "Interfaith leaders are guests on each other's podcasts")

Action 1: _____

Action 2: _____

Action 3: _____

Resources: List of key items, and who has them

(e.g., "First Church has podium, banners and mult box for press conferences")

Name: _____ **Item:** _____

Name: _____ **Item:** _____

Name: _____ **Item:** _____



Actions to take in a crisis:

TAKE PUBLIC ACTION

Vigil:

Potential location 1: _____

Contact info: _____

Items needed: _____

Potential location 2: _____

Contact info: _____

Items needed: _____

Press conference:

Potential location 1: _____

Contact info: _____

Items needed: _____

Potential location 2: _____

Contact info: _____

Items needed: _____

Coordinate with community stakeholders.

Law Enforcement: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Local government: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Business leader: Name: _____ Phone: _____

Newspaper editor: Name: _____ Phone: _____

TV producer: Name: _____ Phone: _____



NEW RELATIONSHIPS TO BUILD

Connections to develop (media, government, business or faith leaders):

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Who will reach out? _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Who will reach out? _____

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Who will reach out? _____

Notes: _____

REMEMBER THE DO'S AND DONT'S

Do:	Don't:
Reinforce unity by appealing to common identity	Reinforce misinformation by repeating it
Humanize targeted groups by publicly appearing together	Reinforce division by using polarizing language.

NOTES:



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Faith in Public Life is a national network of nearly 50,000 clergy and faith leaders united in the prophetic pursuit of justice and the common good. With staff in four states and growing, we work closely with our members to take strategic moral action that shapes policy both locally and nationally.

We believe that faith leaders have unique moral power to influence public debates and build more just and equitable communities.