

### Alison's Boykin Social media speech

Christian Picciolini was born and raised on the south side of Chicago in the working-class neighborhood of Blue Island, which was the birthplace of the American white power skinhead movement. At 14 years old, he became entrenched in the first neo-Nazi skinhead gang in the United States. From violence to weapons, Christian immersed himself in the racist skinhead culture at an early age and quickly became one of the movement's most respected leaders and musical influencers. Please turn your attention to the screen as Christian shares his story of hate, reform and the impact that social media has on our youth in today's society.

As you heard from Christian, it is of great importance that we quickly act on the growing threat of digital terrorism and hate that we, and more importantly, our children, are confronting online, every single day.

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The Simon Wiesenthal Center aligns with you, the Commissioners, and the great citizens of this county, in demanding that social media giants live up to their responsibilities to do more, to help protect our children, by degrading online impact of haters, racists anti-Semites and thugs. I am urging you, the commissioners to write a joint letter to all of the social media companies demanding that they take voluntary steps to protect our youngsters and community from bigotry, terrorism, hate crimes, bullying and gangs. As the Board of Commissioners of the second largest county in the United States, a statement from this body, would have a monumental impact.

It is true that the internet did not create hate, the internet never shot a gun, the internet never plotted a terrorist attack, however, the extremists, criminals, and terrorists who do such things, leverage every Internet technology, especially Social Media. And since the Internet has erased borders, the extremists can be gang members around the corner or terrorists around the world. As a result, we need these social media companies to NOT be our adversaries, but our partners, to help our community and our children.

When children and young adults encounter this type of material online, they cannot be expected to have the scope of knowledge and ethical parameters in place to properly recognize and deal with such hateful and sometimes violent content. Unfortunately, we are finding that many are ill-equipped to handle this onslaught which can have extremely negative consequences, including accepting such online behavior as normal and even acceptable in their social media—dominated world.

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In fact, our Associate Dean, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, in meetings with Facebook leadership, just last week, discussed the need for Facebook, which had done so much to keep extremists off their site, to reassess Facebook Live, to ensure that it never again be hijacked by criminals, terrorists and murderers.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center has been monitoring hate, its propaganda and its adaptation to digital communications for more than 30 years. Our organization's *Digital Hate and Terrorism Project* division are undoubtedly one of the top in the nation in research and study on combating hate groups online. Each year, we release a *Digital Terrorism and Hate Report* to law enforcement agencies, government officials and the public. The report presents hundreds of examples of how terrorists and their enablers, racists at home and abroad, anti-Semites and other bigots leverage internet technologies to mass market their dangerous agendas. For example, the Department of Homeland Security reported that ISIS alone was deploying 200,000 tweets a day

It is time for all of us - parents, educators, clergy, organizational leaders, and politicians, to face our own responsibilities to educate, empower and protect our kids and help them deal with the online tsunami of hate.

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The Simon Wiesenthal Center's *Digital Terrorism and Hate* Project has been a trailblazer in identifying these troubling online trends and have worked with and when necessary pressured Social Media giants including Facebook, YouTube Google and Twitter to demand they do more to establish online rules of conduct and when appropriate to remove and bar use by bigots and pro-terrorist individuals and groups.

But now we much do more, much more—by empowering our young people to learn how to identify and react to the online proliferation of hate. That is why we are launching, with the strong endorsement of Governor Rauner, Secretary of Education Beth Purvis, and Commissioner Boykin, our **Student Tools for Tolerance** Program, in Illinois beginning with the City of Chicago. This program will introduce high school students to recognize and respond to hate, terrorism, and bigotry that they are exposed to online. The Simon Wiesenthal Center facilitators will teach students how to act and react when inevitably confronted with online hate and terrorism.

Cook County Board of Commissioners, we need your help in this undertaking. For this program to reach its fullest potential, I ask that you all unanimously write a letter of support for our **Student Tools for Tolerance Program**, and assist us in implementing this program in Cook County classrooms. In the pursuit to make the internet, and ultimately our communities, a safer place, our combined forces can change the tide of hate.

Let's make a commitment today to stop discussing the problem at hand and implement the important educational tools to empower our youth.

Thank you