



October 1, 2018

This past Sunday, Appalachian State University and our greater community experienced a continuation of alarming (neo-)Nazi language and graffiti striking our campus. Since 2016, acts of this kind have been multiplying at Appalachian State, in Boone, North Carolina, and throughout the nation. Numerous organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center have documented the stunning increase of xenophobic activity in the midst of the current climate. We must not become complacent and accustomed to these declarations of violence as any kind of “new normal.” In fact, few things could be more dangerous.

The Center for Judaic, Holocaust and Peace Studies not only condemns the use of any kind of (neo-)Nazi, White Supremacist, racist, and/or anti-Semitic language and imagery. We also urge every person in the High Country and beyond to take steps to:

(1) Name and identify this kind of parlance and graffiti for what it is – hate speech. Hate speech harms, violates and can, in the last instance, kill. The circumstance that Sunday’s incident occurred in the “free-speech tunnel” is a well-documented Nazi technique to take advantage of alleged weaknesses of a democratic state.

(2) Educate about the workings of racism, anti-Semitism and past and present hate groups, and make new and existing educational programs free and open to the campus and wider communities. As an academic Center with a mission centered on education and research, this is what the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies does best and this is what our public university will continue to do. We will continue to seek alliances with campus groups, departments, centers, and the administration to strengthen these efforts. Anti-xenophobia work is at the very core of our mission and critical for all democratic institutions.

(3) Make Appalachian State University and our community more welcoming to everyone, especially those students, faculty, staff and community members most affected by hate speech. Jewish women and men are targeted, as are other groups like women and men of color, immigrants, the disabled, religious minorities, and LGBTQIA+ people. Creating a caring and supportive environment is a crucial task for *everyone*.

It is your and my choice to take part and become an active part of the constructive response to these daunting challenges. Silence and complacency are not options.

On behalf of the Center for Judaic, Holocaust and Peace Studies,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Pegelow Kaplan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Thomas Pegelow Kaplan

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