

# Responding to Hate Propaganda: What You Need to Know



**The ADL Center on Extremism tracks white supremacist, antisemitic and other hate-related propaganda incidents across the United States. In recent years, the number of such incidents has grown significantly, and an increasing number of people are being exposed to hateful propaganda in a variety of ways. This toolkit provides information and guidance allowing people to respond to any encounters with hate propaganda in a safe and positive way.**

**This toolkit is intended as an educational resource only. It is not intended and should not be interpreted to provide legal advice or guidance.**

## Alert Appropriately

Alert relevant officials, including local law enforcement. Depending on where the propaganda is found, a crime may have been committed. Notify elected officials, such as a local councilmember or the mayor's office. If the propaganda is affixed to privately owned property or adhered to or graffitied on a location like a school or business, notify the property owners. Also [report the incident](#) to ADL.

## Document Carefully

If propaganda was left on a windshield, lawn or any other public place — keep it instead of throwing it away. Take photos of hateful fliers, posters or graffiti, making note of the date, time and location. If you receive propaganda through the mail, save all the materials, including envelopes. If possible, provide additional information, like what areas of your neighborhood received fliers. Use the [ADL H.E.A.T. Map](#) to determine if there have been other incidents in your town or city.



## Avoid Engagement and Confrontation; Prioritize Safety

Your safety and the safety of others around you is the most important concern in these situations. If you see someone spreading hateful propaganda, do not confront them or try to make them leave. If you see extremists protesting on the side of the road or on an overpass, do not engage with them. This can be dangerous and may benefit extremists if they get the confrontation on video, because they can share the video with their followers. In all situations — go somewhere safe and notify law enforcement. Don't pick up or remove propaganda in the view of someone distributing it. Let the authorities handle the removal of hateful propaganda.

## Share Responsibly

It is appropriate and responsible to alert local media to hateful propaganda incidents so they can investigate and inform the community. However, use caution when thinking about sharing on social media. Extremists often want exposure and the propaganda itself might be disturbing or triggering to some. If you feel you must share images or video of propaganda you see or find, block or blur out any website URLs, email addresses, phone numbers and names of extremist groups. Do not help extremists share their contact information.

## Why Hate Propaganda Exists

White supremacists comprise a tiny minority of Americans. Despite that, they seek a radical reshaping of society to exclude or even eliminate the many types of people they hate—including people of color, Jews and Muslims, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community and others—and to form an extreme race-based society in which only white people will exist and exercise power.

To accomplish this, white supremacists attempt to spread racism, antisemitism and other forms of bigotry to recruit new followers and intimidate, harass and harm their perceived enemies. While some white supremacists choose violence as a tactic to achieve these goals, others spread propaganda. These days, much of that propaganda occurs online, but white supremacists still spend a surprising amount of time and effort spreading propaganda in the physical world.

Hate propaganda tends to seek one or more of the following goals:

- 1 Conveying a hateful message, such as the antisemitic myth that Jews control the media or the racist falsehood that Black people are inherently violent;
- 2 Sparking fear and anxiety in any person of a targeted community who may view such propaganda; and
- 3 Directing people to a source (typically online) for more “information,” thus beginning the process of recruitment.

## How Hate Propaganda is Disseminated

White supremacists and other haters serve up their propaganda in a variety of different ways, using any method that might catch attention: truck-mounted billboards, planes trailing banners or even new technologies like laser projections of images or messages onto buildings. However, most hate propaganda incidents in the physical world tend to take just a few forms:

- 1 Fliers or other hate materials **distributed at people’s homes, their car windshields or other locations**. This may also include hateful materials sent through the mail or (more rarely) e-mail.
- 2 Fliers or other hate materials **posted in public places**, such as on lampposts or buildings (this category also includes hate graffiti).
- 3 **In-person propaganda exhibitions** by white supremacists or other types of hate groups, including “flash” demonstrations in places like a freeway overpass or alongside a road, where extremists show up to display signs and banners with hateful messages on them.

It is important to recognize, however, that such activities are only the first stage of dissemination.

For the second phase, white supremacists and other haters capitalize on the fact that many recipients or observers of hate propaganda will be outraged and will share it with local news or on social media, allowing it to reach a much wider audience. If you decide to share hate propaganda to warn others, it is important to censor any contact information about the group that posted it, including the group’s name, website URL, email address or social media accounts.

# Anatomy of a Hate Flier

Hate fliers are one of the oldest and most common forms of hate propaganda. Typically, an extremist will put a hate flier into a plastic baggie (to protect it from the elements), with gravel or sand to weigh it down. Occasionally, extremists will use candy to make parents think they are trying to recruit children — making it even more likely the propaganda will get shared on social media.



**ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all.**


  
adl.org


605 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10158-3650  
(212) 885.7700

© 2024 Anti-Defamation League

 @ADL

 Anti-Defamation League

 @ADL\_National

 @ADL

