



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION ON CIVIL RIGHTS
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April 5, 2019

Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Facebook, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025
VIA Email and USPS

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

On behalf of the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights (DCR), I am writing to bring to your attention the Rise Up Ocean County Facebook page and the comments that appear on that page inciting violence against Orthodox Jews. The New Jersey Legislature created DCR nearly seventy-five years ago to enforce the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination and “prevent and eliminate discrimination” in New Jersey. N.J.S.A. § 10:5-6. In addition to investigating and prosecuting complaints of discrimination, DCR also takes proactive steps to prevent acts of bias, prejudice and discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, disability, and other characteristics protected by the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination. It is in that capacity that I write to bring the Rise Up Ocean County (RUOC) Facebook page to your attention.

The RUOC Facebook page appears to have been created in late 2018 to oppose what it calls the overdevelopment of Lakewood, New Jersey, by Orthodox Jews. The page states that “[q]uality of life in Ocean County is under assault, we are organizing to restrict the development and preserve our quality of life.” In a video posted on its Facebook page, the group predicts that Lakewood’s population will double by 2030 and refers to an oncoming “colonization” that it claims is being led by a number of Orthodox Jewish rabbis who “control the fate of Lakewood.” The group has also posted a video on its page with the caption, “RUOC DECLARES WAR!” That video begins with the message, “Rise Up Ocean County, It’s War.” The Facebook page also repeatedly promotes a documentary the group is currently creating to document the “colonization” of Ocean County by Orthodox Jews. One trailer for the documentary threatens that “200,000 more people are coming our way unless we rise up [and] stop it here and stop it now.”

Many of RUOC’s posts promote negative stereotypes and conspiracy theories about Orthodox Jews. The page even parodied the poem “First They Came...,” written by a German Lutheran pastor to condemn



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the silence of Germans during the Holocaust.¹ In the RUOC page parody, the poem was invoked to encourage individuals not to be silent in the face of Orthodox Jews moving to Lakewood.

The Lakewood Township Committee and the Ocean County Freeholders both recently passed resolutions condemning the RUOC page. The Lakewood resolution concluded that RUOC's page was anti-Semitic and "an effort to discredit the Jewish population" and "incite ill will."² The Ocean County resolution stated that it was "opposing and condemning the administrators, creators and many of the activities of Rise Up Ocean County."³

After learning about RUOC's Facebook page, my office has reviewed the page's content. Many comments on the page appear to incite violence against Orthodox Jews.⁴ The following are examples of comments that appear to incite violence against Orthodox Jews:

"We need to get rid of them like Hitler did."

"Start bull-doing the illegal dwellings, illegal home schools, illegal temples, and so on and re-plant with trees and floral to replace what has been stolen"

"And when they resist, bull-doze them too."

"I live on the edge of Toms River and Lakewood and the gang war has begun. I have my mac11 loaded."

"I'm knocking out the first person I see from Lakewood at the meeting tomorrow. Again, not a threat. It's a promise."

RUOC's administrators have even "liked" one such comment: "Toms River people need to declare war!!! Surrounding towns will come and join the fight. Wake up people. VOTES WON'T FIX THIS."

There is a rising tide of hate around our country and around our state. We at the Division on Civil Rights are working with community organizations to combat it by creating connections, fostering mutual understanding and respect, and confronting stereotypes. You at Facebook also have a role to play in monitoring comments that incite violence based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, and disability.

¹ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum quotes one version of the poem as: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me." <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/martin-niemoeller-first-they-came-for-the-socialists>.

² Stacey Barchenger and Jean Mikle, *Lakewood publicly denounces anonymous Facebook group. Will other towns follow?*, Asbury Park Press (Feb. 13, 2019), available at <https://www.app.com/story/news/local/communitychange/2019/02/13/lakewood-denounces-anonymous-facebook-group-other-towns-follow/2815052002/>.

³ Erik Larsen, *Rise Up Ocean County calls freeholders Benedict Arnold after condemnation*, Asbury Park Press (Feb. 21, 2019), available at <https://www.app.com/story/news/politics/ocean-county/2019/02/21/freeholders-oppose-and-condemn-creators-rise-up-ocean-county/2936185002/>.

⁴ Comments can be deleted at any time without leaving a public record, so some of those comments may have been deleted since the time that they appeared on the page.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rachel Wainer Apter", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Rachel Wainer Apter

Director, New Jersey Division on Civil Rights