

# Making a Difference

## Imagining a World Without Hate

An Interview with Jonathan Greenblatt,  
Chief Executive Officer and National Director, Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to heading ADL, Jonathan Greenblatt served in the White House as Special Assistant to President Obama and Director of the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation. He came into that role after a long career as a serial social entrepreneur and corporate executive. He co-founded Ethos Brands, the business that launched Ethos Water. He was also named Vice President of global consumer products at Starbucks and joined the board of the Starbucks Foundation.



Jonathan Greenblatt

Greenblatt founded All for Good (AFG), the open-data platform designed to enable more people to serve. Prior to AFG, he served as CEO of GOOD Worldwide. Earlier in his career, he worked as an executive at REALTOR.com (now Move Networks), joining the company as a product manager and eventually heading up its consumer products unit. From 2006 to 2011, he taught social entrepreneurship at the Anderson School of Management at UCLA. In 2015, he served as a senior fellow at the Wharton School of Management. Greenblatt graduated cum laude with a B.A. from Tufts University and earned his M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University.

**ORGANIZATION BRIEF** The Anti-Defamation League ([adl.org](http://adl.org)), founded in 1913, is the world's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism through programs and services that counteract hatred, prejudice, and bigotry.

**What excited you about the opportunity to lead this organization and made you feel it would be the right fit?**

When I was a senior in college at Tufts University, I interned at the ADL office in Boston. I had spent time in my junior year studying abroad and visiting Europe, where my grandfather was from. I was struck by how Jewish people had been forced to flee their homelands during the Holocaust and faced the worst kind of anti-Semitism through the centuries. I wanted to do something about that issue in the U.S.

I learned a lot about the organization. It was founded almost 100 years prior to my internship. Its mission has always been to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all. This dual mission really resonated with me and I had a wonderful experience.

Ten years later, when I moved to Los Angeles to get my M.B.A., I met my wife when she was an associate director at the local ADL office.

When I was given an opportunity to interview for this leadership role, I was quite humbled. I had not necessarily anticipated I would take on a role like this coming out of the White House, but the opportunity to be part of an organization doing such meaningful work was a great privilege to even be considered for, and I feel fortunate that I've been given the

responsibility.

**Has the organization stayed true to its mission or has it evolved?**

The mission statement that was written in 1913 and enshrined in our founding charter remains as relevant in 2017.

Over the years, that dual mission has compelled us to do things like march with Dr. King and work on behalf of the African-American community to help them achieve civil rights and legal equality.

It has compelled us to stand up for the LGBT community and work on issues like marriage equality and forms of discrimination. It has compelled us to work on behalf of immigrants and members of the Hispanic community or Latinos in their quest for equal treatment.

Over the generations, ADL has been at the forefront of this work in addition to our transformational work fighting anti-Semitism in society.

**How do you put metrics in place to track impact?**

With advocacy, we try to change laws through the courts, through Congress, or through state houses and city councils. Literally 90 percent of the states in America have hate crimes laws in large part because of the ADL. We have also fought for a federal law. Much of our advocacy is around civil rights and religious freedom issues. We also use the moral authority of our voice to speak up when it's necessary.

We do our work through education as well. We're one of the largest providers of anti-hate and anti-bias curricula and content in the U.S. Our materials reach two million children every year.

In addition, we work with law enforcement to investigate hate crimes. We're often the first to be contacted when there is a bias incident. We train up to 15,000 law enforcement officers every year on how to deal with

extremism and hate. We have a research apparatus that is deeply focused on evaluating and analyzing trends in extremism so we can better assist law enforcement.

In the advocacy space, we measure progress by our ability to get a law passed or through the use of our public voice to change perception on an issue.

With education, we might judge that on the basis of how many students we reached with our anti-hate resources, or we'll take a poll to determine if our curricula changed the hearts and minds of kids in school.

For law enforcement, we might base that on how we helped them investigate a number of hate crimes successfully, how we helped attorneys to get those crimes prosecuted, or if we've impacted their ability to report on hate crimes.

**What can be done to renew the relationship between Israel and the U.S. today?**

The bilateral relationship needs some attention but, in some ways, it's still very strong. We just signed a \$38-billion military aid package with Israel, which is the largest in the history of the two countries.

On a people-to-people level, there has never been more engagement. Israel is one of the leading players in the world of cybersecurity. All of us are using Israeli technology on our laptops and phones.

At the political level, there is still clear bipartisan support for the bilateral relationship. There is always work to be done because Israel is facing an incredibly complex set of threats in the region.

**While your tagline, "Imagine a World Without Hate," is positive, many feel it's hard to be optimistic when there is so much hate in the world. Are you positive this will be addressed?**

I remain, essentially, an optimist. Hate crimes in 2016 were up over 2015, not only against Jews, though they are the largest targeted minority group. We see a great deal of threats coming from both the radical left and the extreme right. There is no shortage of ideologically dogmatic people with terrible ideas.

That said, we live in the most vibrant democracy on the planet, in the most pluralistic country in the world, and in a democracy that has sustained economic depression, military conflict, civil war, social unrest, and national disasters, and the country has come out stronger through those great challenges. ●