

***On the recent events in Charlottesville, Virginia, NJCASA's Executive Director, Patricia Teffenhart, said:***

“I want to say something about Charlottesville. About Nazis. About hate. About how our white-washed history books have conveniently avoided articulating an accurate account of our nation's ugly past.

I want to say that I'm shocked to see American citizens waving torches and spewing hate speech. But as a person who works in the anti-violence movement, I am unfortunately not. And I know that many community members who face this oppression every day are not surprised either.

I want to say that these are isolated cases in tension-filled communities. But every town in this country has its elements of Charlottesville. On most days, these tensions hide beneath the surface, as it has for centuries. Hate and bias are passed down through the generations through private family conversations over dinner. But if we've been paying even a modicum of attention, we've been able to sense lately that hate is now permitted to breathe more publicly. It's not that it's *new*. Now, it's just more comfortably seeping out of the closed doors of private residences and from behind the screens of online communities. It's showing up in places that should deny people with privilege the opportunity to turn a blind eye.

I want to say that I spent a year in Germany in the mid-90's and that there was ZERO tolerance for Nazis. On one occasion, a swastika had been spray-painted near our school and the town just about shut down as we attended mandatory discussions about history, hate, and the ways in which our community would not recommit the crimes of our past. These conversations do not happen here. We allow hate to hide behind the First Amendment and then we embolden it with the Second. While our offices in New Jersey are 296 miles from Charlottesville, we too are impacted by the ignorance and bias that creates community unrest and mistrust in systems.

We urge folks to take care: of themselves, of each other, and of our communities.”