

Center on Technology & Society



Brittan sums up what's needed.

'To encapsulate, we think that social platforms need better reporting options, they need to improve the response time about these complaints, they need to invest in new tools to curb cyber harassment, they need to work on transparency about their abuse process reviews. That's the nutshell.'

Brittan Heller

Director of ADL Center on Technology
& Society



Excitement turns to hatred—and then fear.



Jennifer Jones-Wood, left, with ADL Central Pacific Region Director of Development Shaun Kozolchik.

A picture is worth a thousand words. But on the Internet, it can be bait for trolls and a target for hate. That's what Jennifer Jones-Wood woke up to one morning in December 2016.

Her four-year-old daughter had gotten to meet a candidate she really admired during the election campaign, and a photo was snapped to preserve the moment. Mrs. Jones-Wood thought the image would be a lasting symbol of an exciting moment. But haters found the photo and turned it into a disgusting, hate-filled meme targeting an innocent child.

When hate spreads like wildfire.

Scared, angry and frantic, Mrs. Jones-Wood implored the site administrator to remove the defaced image from the page. After relentless pleas, they took down the image, but it had already been shared on social media in places where it would have been viewed by thousands. And erasing anything completely, once it spreads across the Internet, is nearly impossible. But ADL's experts immediately went to work.

ADL brings expertise, credibility and relationships.

An ADL staff member in San Francisco saw what was happening online and—a mother herself—was appalled by such abuse and fear. She knew ADL had the tools to help, the legal know-how and the technological relationships to resolve the issue. And from there, ADL took action. ADL's Cyberhate Response Unit, working in conjunction with ADL's new Center on Technology & Society, gathered information about the photo and its posting, and sought data to combat this insidious incident.

Once it became clear to the haters they could face civil penalties and massive fines for defacing and posting the child's photo, it was removed.

Leading the fight against cyberhate.

ADL's decades-long leadership in fighting cyberhate led to the establishment in 2016 of the ADL Center on Technology & Society. Based in Silicon Valley, the new Center expands ADL's ongoing work with companies from industry leaders to startups. The Center leverages technology for social justice and collaborates with emerging watchdog groups like the Twitter Trust & Safety Council, of which ADL is an inaugural member.

Success and hope go viral.

"The success went viral," Mrs. Jones-Wood said, "and the greatest thing of all is that ADL was able to reach out and help so many other moms that had the same thing happen to their children. I am so grateful to ADL for their assistance."