



## Valley Interfaith Project

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Valley Interfaith Project (VIP) stands with the Metro Phoenix Jewish community in this time of grief and fear. We condemn the shooting that took place at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. In the aftermath of this tragedy, we urge our leaders to end the inflammatory rhetoric that has become the norm in political speech.

We are alarmed at the rise of anti-Semitism and violence in this country. Increasingly, people of faith are fearful to gather in their house of worship. It is unacceptable that what should be a sanctuary would become a place of fear. We see a direct line from the current public discourse to the violent actions against not only people of faith, but others in society as well.

We know that this polarized climate doesn't have to be nor should it be normalized. We have demonstrated that people from diverse backgrounds can work together around common agendas that cross racial, ethnic, religious, political, gender and class divides. We are compelled to challenge all of us to stand with Jewish communities throughout the nation in this hour of horror and tragedy.

We call for an end to political rhetoric that seeks to agitate and divide. The political season in which the campaign tactics are to malign, denigrate and disparage, has long spilled over, past the election and into normal public life. We call on elected leaders at all levels, both in Washington DC and right here in Arizona to cease the caustic rhetoric. We ask them to consider not only the impact it has on those who would do violence but also how it degrades the very fabric that makes up our society. We call on those leaders to set aside their polarization and find ways to build consensus, to work across party lines and to represent their constituents with responsibility and dignity.

VIP is a local broad-based organization with a 30-year history of working across lines of race, class, and faith traditions to address issues of mutual interest. It has a track record of training thousands of local leaders to address issues of health care, quality education, housing, and immigration, among others. We intentionally work to build a sense of greater community valuing diversity, pluralism, and acting together to form a common life, to build local democracy and strengthen public life.

Going forward, VIP will continue our work of organizing and community building for the common good. This work requires tolerance from those with a broad spectrum of political and religious beliefs and traditions, and the acceptance that sometimes they will disagree. It is driven by a sincere commitment to the idea that we are all responsible for forming a common public life.

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