

# Mallory should speak out against hate



**Your Turn**  
Lael Gray  
Guest columnist

Spike Lee's widely acclaimed film, *Blackkklansman*, takes us back to the early 1970s to illuminate the racist and anti-Jewish ideology of the Klu Klux Klan. The film makes a clear connection between those beliefs and current White Nationalist theories of Jewish malfeasance and Jewish manipulation of black and brown people to destroy the White race. Recent proliferation of these theories on White Nationalist websites and social media are blamed for inspiring Robert Bowers to post "I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in," prior to entering Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue in October to murder innocent Jews. This shocking crime was the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history.

In my role at the Asheville Jewish Community Center, I am in the unfortunate position of getting daily reports on the growing number of hate crimes perpetrated against Jewish people in the U.S. and throughout the entire world. These daily incidents include desecration of synagogues and cemeteries, Jews being called "apes and pigs" at anti-Israel rallies, threats to Jews on college campuses, and acts of violence. A recent CNN poll determined that 40 percent of Europeans believe Jews are at risk of racist violence in their countries, and nearly one in five said anti-Semitism is a response to Jewish behavior.

The Anti-Defamation League reported a 57 percent rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. in 2017, compared to 2016.

Dr. Steven Windmueller, who writes frequently about modern trends in anti-Semitism, points out that today's political culture and communication technology have "given space to the voices of hate, both left and right, to offer their angry perspectives on the status of Jews." He further explains that today's anti-Semitism borrows from earlier periods of anti-Semitic rhetoric perpetuated throughout history, while adding more modern elements of race identity. Depending on who is making the argument, modern anti-Semites might propose that Jews are a distinct, evil race conspiring against Whites, or declare that Jews are at the helm of an oppressive White power structure, thereby invalidating Jewish claims of racial persecution.

Tamika Mallory, one of the leaders of the Women's March who will be speaking in Asheville this month, has faced significant backlash for her participation at the Nation of Islam's Saviour's Day in 2018, where Louis Farrakhan continued his tirade against the Jews. Ms. Mallory has since responded to the criticism, explaining that she has attended the Saviour's Day event for 30 years and that the Nation of Islam supported her through the most difficult period of her life. She points to her record as a coalition builder. She states her belief that Jews are to be counted among all of the historically oppressed people who should stand together to fight bias, and she asks that we not hold her responsible for the words of others.



**Tamika Mallory, co-founder of the Women's March, speaks at the Women's March on Washington Jan. 21, 2017.** KISHABARI/WOMEN'S MARCH

Throughout his career, Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has consistently blamed the oppression of Black Americans on Jewish people, combining historically common religious themes that were used to inspire the expulsion and murder of Jews, with 20th century myths about a Jewish conspiracy to control the world. Mr. Farrakhan justifies spreading hatred of Jews by claiming that he is doing the work of God. Farrakhan's claims appear to ring true for at least some Black Americans who have benefitted from the Nation of Islam's transformative community service and message of Black empowerment.

Eric K. Ward, Executive Director of

the Western States Center, is a Black American who has worked with communities across the U.S. to fight bigotry. He writes that in his quest to end White supremacy, he discovered that anti-Semitism is the fuel for White Nationalists' anti-Black racism and other forms of hatred. It is therefore not only inherently wrong, but also self-defeating for Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam to continue wrapping a dangerous message of hatred towards Jews inside a package of hope.

I believe that Ms. Mallory has an opportunity to demonstrate both leadership and a commitment to ending bias and persecution of all people, including Jews. I would like to see her call upon Farrakhan and others in the Nation of Islam to finally end their misguided, hateful rhetoric. Perhaps in doing so, she will set an example for those who are quick to dismiss Farrakhan's blatant anti-Semitism as merely a sideshow to the Nation of Islam's other work.

At the same time, I encourage our community to continue the conversation following Ms. Mallory's visit. We also have an opportunity to become more educated about the insidious nature of anti-Semitism, how it is used as a tool that threatens to undermine all of our freedom, and to take action to stem the tide of its growth across the entire political spectrum.

*Lael Gray is the Executive Director of the Asheville Jewish Community Center. The Asheville JCC welcomes people of every background and belief to be part of our community and to participate in our educational, social, recreational and cultural programs.*

## Wary of hearing 'Mission knows best'



**Your Turn**  
Victoria Loe Hicks  
Guest columnist

Mission knows best.

That's the stock answer of Mission's corporate spokeswoman, Rowena Buffett Timms, and others on the Mission team. Asked any question about the proposed sale to HCA – which will put your family's health care in the hands of a for-profit corporation that answers to Wall Street – that's their response: Mission knows best.

Often delivered with a patronizing smile and an implied pat on the head. Don't worry, it's too complicated for you to understand. Just let the grownups handle it. It will be fine, because Mission knows best.

"... no outcome would or could ever fully satisfy everyone, particularly those with only a limited understanding of the transaction" (Buffett Timms to the Citizen Times, Nov. 26, 2018).

Don't worry that the sales agreement creates a "local advisory board" for each hospital, whose one and only reason for existing is to cut services or sell or close the hospital – in other words, to override

HCA's so-called "guarantee" of continued services. And don't worry that Mission and HCA will determine the membership of those boards.

"Healthcare is an ever-changing industry ... At times, certain services may need to be ... discontinued in order to continue providing the highest quality of care close to home for patients" (Buffett Timms to North Carolina Health News, Nov. 29, 2018).

Don't worry that the list of so-called protected services for the rural hospitals is pitifully short and so vague as to be legally meaningless.

"Every single entity within the Mission Health system will have very significant protections with this transaction that they lack today" (Buffett Timms to the Citizen Times, Nov. 26, 2018).

Don't worry that HCA is not required to notify local officials if it decides to sell a hospital, making it harder for the community to reacquire the hospital or seek a preferred buyer.

"While it's easy to understand why those who don't appreciate the challenges and complexity of operating a rural hospital in today's environment may reflexively and emotionally 'want their' hospital back, it is unlikely that

any knowledgeable observer would believe that is a realistic possibility" (Buffett Timms to the Citizen Times, July 11, 2018).

Don't worry that Mission and HCA don't trust North Carolina law or North Carolina juries to resolve disputes arising from the agreement (all cases will go to arbitration in Delaware).

Don't worry that almost half the board members of the Dogwood Health Trust, which will get the roughly \$1.5 billion generated by the sale, live in the zip code that includes Biltmore Forest, 28803. Or that the board, chosen by Mission people, is dominated by (you guessed it) Mission people.

"What you want [on such a board] are the very best that you have to offer in your community ..." (Buffett Timms to dailyyonder.com, Dec. 17, 2018)

"We understand what challenges we have with the board. We don't think they are as great as other people perceive." (Dogwood chairwoman Janice Brumit to the Citizen Times, Oct. 17, 2018)

Don't worry that Dogwood's public rollout was an invitation-only bash so lavish that attendees pegged the cost as high as \$300,000, and one said being there made her feel "dirty."

Don't worry that Dogwood, con-

trolled by Mission people, is supposed to enforce promises made by HCA, which will be run locally by Mission people. That's not a conflict of interest, it's a bonus!

"Not only is there no 'conflict' with respect to the current Dogwood Health Trust Board, there is a direct benefit ..." (Answer to a query submitted via the missionhealthforward.org website)

And the folks who find fault with the terms of the sale? Whiners and halfwits. "... organized, self-interested opposition ... a small group of loud voices ..." (Buffett Timms to the MountainXpress, Dec. 13, 2018)

Pay no attention to those pesky malcontents, because Mission knows best.

If that answer satisfies you, if Mission's past behavior has inspired your confidence, live long and prosper. If not, find out more by visiting searchwnc.org.

Then tell Attorney General Josh Stein what you think. Stein's office is negotiating changes to the sales agreement, and he's expressed concern about many of the issues outlined above. You can support him in doing right by Western North Carolina by calling 1-877-5NOS-CAM or emailing Special Deputy Attorney General Jennifer Harrod at jharrod@ncdoj.gov.

*Victoria Loe Hicks lives in Mitchell County.*

## Mission is sending wrong people to do good work



**Your Turn**  
Carmen Ramos-Kennedy and Risa Larsen  
Guest columnists

Here's the task: Help good people see that they may be the wrong people to do good work.

That's the conundrum facing critics of current makeup of Dogwood Health Trust board, which is strongly dominated by Mission Health board members. More to the point, it's the conundrum facing state Attorney General Josh Stein.

Fortunately, because the Mission people who have set up Dogwood are good people, they may come to understand. But it's tricky, because they're deeply invested, and they're no doubt feeling personally – and unfairly – maligned.

From their point of view, they are obviously the best people to administer the roughly \$1.5 billion that will flow to Dogwood when Mission is sold to HCA. They have years, in some cases decades, of experience overseeing Mission, and

they regard Dogwood as its "successor."

What's understandably hard for them to see is that, in this instance, loyalty to Mission can be a liability rather than an asset.

Mission is a business that provides a service; Dogwood will disperse money to combat problems like poverty, inadequate education, social isolation and barriers to inclusion and equity. The knowledge and skills required are very, very different.

Meanwhile, Mission's executive team will continue to run the hospitals as a division of HCA. That gives HCA a direct line to Dogwood's boardroom. As the Citizen Times Editorial Board noted: "The great danger is that the [trust's] money could be used to take over unprofitable services now provided by Mission, thus enhancing HCA's bottom line rather than addressing broader health issues."

Dogwood is also supposed to make sure that HCA lives up to its commitments under the sales contract. But for the Mission people on the Dogwood board, calling out bad behavior by HCA will mean calling out their old colleagues at Mission. It will also mean admitting they chose a buyer that proved less than trustworthy. Not easy to do.

These kinds of deals have been going on around the country for decades. Examples number in the hundreds. A massive body of experience and research says it's critical that the nonprofit that receives the proceeds be independent of the old hospital system. Dogwood must operate, in the words of one expert, like a startup, not a successor.

Unlike many states, North Carolina doesn't have a law that specifically addresses how to convert a nonprofit hospital to a for-profit one. It does have a law addressing an analogous process: the conversion of a nonprofit health insurance company to a for-profit. (It was written when Blue Cross wanted to make that shift.)

That law does not govern this sale, but it does embody the best thinking of the North Carolina legislature on the central issues involved.

It gives the attorney general the responsibility of naming new foundation's board from among candidates proposed by an advisory committee. The advisory committee is drawn from the state's business, medical, academic and nonprofit communities and is aided by a professional search and recruitment firm.

If Mission's leaders can look beyond their desire to control Dogwood's money, there is a clear path forward. They have already said, in response to criticism, that the initial board will primarily set up the foundation in preparation for the later work of distributing the funds

(Of course, they also said the number of Mission-connected members would be minimal, so a grain of salt is in order).

The truly public-spirited course would be to agree to serve only long enough for a process designed by the attorney general to produce a fresh slate of independent board members. The interim, Mission-dominated board would see that the \$1.5 billion is wisely invested. The second board would establish policies and hire a CEO and staff.

An objective process might well result in the selection of some Mission board members to serve on Dogwood's board. If so, they would have the public's full trust, untainted by any hint of cronyism.

In the end, trust is Dogwood's one truly indispensable asset, an asset Mission's leaders have put in peril by their actions, however well-intentioned. Let's just hope they are good enough and mature enough to embrace a more open and deliberative process – or, failing that, that the attorney general will require it as a condition for approving the sale.

*Carmen Ramos-Kennedy and Risa Larsen speak on behalf of the Health Equity Coalition. Larsen is a member of Sustaining Essential and Rural Community Healthcare committee based in Yancey and Mitchell counties. Ramos-Kennedy is President of the Asheville Buncombe County NAACP and Living Wage Program Coordinator of Just Economics.*