

## On the Frontlines of Hate

March 2, 2021 at 4:00pm Hawaii

### Speaker Biographies

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**Elif İrem AZ**

Consultant, Media Watch on Hate Speech, Hrant Dink Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey  
[@HrantDinkFnd](#)

Elif İrem Az is a PhD candidate and teaching fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University. Her research is situated in a post-disaster coalmining context in Aegean Turkey. Heeding the ongoing effects of the Soma Mine Disaster of May 13, 2014, she examines the links between socioeconomic vulnerability, increasing social and health inequalities, and the consolidation of right-wing regimes. Prior to her doctoral studies, Ms. İrem Az worked as a project coordinator at the Hrant Dink Foundation, and remains a consultant interested in discriminatory and polarizing discourse. She is also author of a book of Turkish (ethnographic) poetry, *sade yaşadığımız* [our sheer living] (Nod, 2020).



**James GOMEZ**

Regional Director, Asia Centre, Bangkok, Thailand and Johor Bahru, Malaysia  
[@asiacentre.org](#)

James Gomez is regional director at the Asia Centre in Bangkok, a not-for-profit organization that seeks to create human rights impact in the region and undertakes evidence-based research on issues related to freedom of expression. Its report, “Hate Speech in Southeast Asia: New Forms, Old Rules,” has been well received globally and widely reported in the media. Dr. Gomez provides strategic oversight for the regionalization of the Centre, builds relationships with key stakeholders around the world and represents the organization in media and public speaking engagements. He brings to Asia Centre over 25 years of international and regional experience in leadership roles at universities, think-tanks, inter-governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. He holds a PhD from Monash University, Australia, an MA from the University of Essex, United Kingdom, and B.Soc.Sci. (Hons.) from the National University of Singapore.



**Christian PICCIOLINI**

Author, *Breaking Hate: Confronting The New Culture of Extremism*; and Founder, Free Radicals Project, Chicago, IL, USA  
[@cpicciolini](#) [@FreeRadicalsOrg](#)

Christian Picciolini is an award-winning television producer, public speaker, author, peace advocate, and a former violent extremist. After leaving the hate movement he helped create during the 1980s and 90s, he began the painstaking process of making amends and rebuilding his life. Since leaving the white-power movement, Mr. Picciolini has dedicated his life to helping others overcome their own hate by launching Goldmill Group, a counter-extremism consulting and digital media firm. In addition, he leads the Free Radicals Project, a global extremism prevention and disengagement network. He has spoken all over the world, including on the TED stage,

and in 2016, he won an Emmy Award for producing an anti-hate advertising campaign aimed at helping people disengage from extremism. Mr. Picciolini chronicled his involvement and exit from the early American white-supremacist skinhead movement in his memoir, *White American Youth*, and is the featured subject in season 3 of WBEZ's *Motiv* podcast. He showcases his disengagement work in his second book, *Breaking Hate: Confronting the New Culture of Extremism*, published in 2020 (Hachette Books), as well as in the MSNBC documentary series of the same name. Mr. Picciolini holds a degree in international relations from DePaul University.



**Oren SEGAL**

Vice-President, Center on Extremism, Anti-Defamation League, New York City, NY  
USA [@orensenal](#)

Oren Segal is vice president of the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Center on Extremism, where his team combats extremism, terrorism and all forms of hate in the real world and online. Recognized as the foremost authority on extremism, the Center provides resources, expertise and training which enables law enforcement, public officials and internet and technology companies to identify and counter emerging threats. Mr. Segal joined ADL in 1998 after working for *The New York Times* and the Jewish Community Federation in San Francisco. Much of his 21 years with ADL has been devoted to evaluating the activity and tactics of extremist groups and movements from across the ideological spectrum, training law enforcement officers, and publishing reports and articles on a wide range of extremist topics. In 2006, Mr. Segal was recognized by the FBI for his exceptional service in the public interest. He was named to the Forward's list of 50 influential, intriguing and inspiring American Jews in 2019. Mr. Oren Segal is a graduate of Wheaton College in Massachusetts.

**Moderator:**



**Nathan BOMEY**

Reporter, *USA TODAY* and Author, *Bridge Builders: Bringing People Together in a Polarized Age*, Washington, DC, USA [@NathanBomey](#)

Nathan Bomey is a reporter for *USA Today*, an author and a documentary scriptwriter. At *USA Today*, he tracks how business is changing, covers the automotive industry and writes about the impact of misinformation on America's political discourse. His new book, [Bridge Builders: Bringing People Together in a Polarized Age](#), will be released in May 2021 by Polity Press. In *Bridge Builders*, he dissects the transformational ways in which countercultural Americans are combatting polarization. Mr. Bomey is also the author of *After the Fact: The Erosion of Truth and the Inevitable Rise of Donald Trump* – a book about the misinformation age. Before joining *USA Today* in 2015, he worked as a business reporter for the *Detroit Free Press*. That experience culminated in his first book, *Detroit Resurrected: To Bankruptcy and Back*, which tells the inside story of the largest Chapter 9 bankruptcy in U.S. history. Mr. Bomey has made many appearances on national TV and radio networks and won several national journalism awards, including the National Headliner Award and honors from the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. A 2006 graduate of Eastern Michigan University, Mr. Bomey participated in the East-West Center's China-US Journalists Exchange program in 2012. In addition to his day job, he is currently serving as principal scriptwriter on a full-length documentary film on the Detroit bankruptcy.