

AJC Appeals to Cable TV Executives to End Airing of Anti-Immigrant Hate



American Jewish Committee
A Century of Leadership

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The American Jewish Committee is urging the heads of major cable television networks to ensure that the background of certain so-called immigration experts appearing on news shows is revealed to the viewing audience.

“It is inappropriate and offensive for major television programs to provide a microphone to individuals and organizations that promote hate, espouse vigilantism, white supremacy, or even violence in the immigration debate,” AJC General Counsel Jeffrey Sinensky wrote in a letter to the heads of CNN, FOX and MSNBC.

“There is no excuse for television talk show hosts and commentators failing to investigate the backgrounds of the people they invite on their shows to speak on the issue of immigration.”

The AJC letter was delivered today to Jim Walton, president of CNN Worldwide; Roger Ailes, chairman and CEO of FOX News Corporation; and Phil Griffin, executive-in-charge of MSNBC. AJC has partnered with the National Council of La Raza and its “We Can Stop the Hate” campaign launched recently to counter the increasing rhetoric on the airwaves that already has caused a rise in hate crimes against Latinos.

AJC pointed out specifically that *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and *MSNBC News Live* offer national platforms to spokespeople who represent known vigilante or hate-promoting groups, including Jim Gilchrist and Chris Simcox of the Minuteman Project and Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR).

They regularly appear on news programs as anti-immigration "expert commentators" and pundits. “Rarely is their status as a representative of a vigilante group or one that promotes hate acknowledged or challenged. Rarely do they face anyone with an opposing viewpoint,” said Sinensky.

In addition, the AJC letter noted that spokespeople espousing vigilantism and fear regularly appear on nightly news programs. They often speak in code, calling immigrants "criminals," "an army of invaders," and "diseased"; and children born to immigrants are

referred to as "anchor babies." Many talk show hosts and commentators parrot this hate speech on their broadcasts.

“Hate speech has no legitimate role in the media. History has shown repeatedly that it can be the precursor to violence,” said Sinensky. “Issues such as immigration can be explored legitimately and thoroughly without demonizing an entire group of people.”

AJC, the oldest human relations organization in the U.S., has been a longstanding advocate for fair and open immigration, and a strong supporter of comprehensive immigration reform.