

# ALBANY CALIFORNIA



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## **MAYOR'S STATEMENT THOUSAND OAKS SHOOTING**

Only a few days after the horrific shooting in Pittsburgh, another mass shooting occurred in Thousand Oaks. I couldn't write a Mayor's statement right away as I felt there was nothing left to say. I have written far too many of these in my 2 years as Mayor.

I heard a news anchor comment "if you weren't actively doing something to prevent this violence, don't say you are sorry, don't send prayers - you don't really care", which resonated with me. But what can we do?

On Sunday I attended the kickoff rally for United Against Hate Week. Listening to the speakers, young and not so young, I felt a spark of hope. The students from Berkeley High School sharing information about their green dot anti-bullying program; Singh Kaleka, a member of the Oak Creek WI Sikh Temple whose father was murdered during the 2012 attack, speaking together with Arno Michaelis, a former neo Nazi, about how together they spread the message that love can overcome hate; the beautiful poetry by Samuel Getachew, Oakland's Junior Poet Laureate; the wisdom of Reverend Buford talking about human rights, all came together with the Bay Area community to remind us together we can stand up against hate.

We must build a culture of peace and understanding; a culture of respect. This comes from our daily interactions with each other; conversations with family, friends and coworkers. It comes from smiling at or speaking a kind word to a stranger. It comes from civil discourse, an ability to disagree without being disagreeable. It comes from taking care of one another. This culture will not result from activities during one week alone but must be a lifelong commitment from each of us to recognize our shared humanity, to reach out to help those in need and to stand up for those facing hate.

Just as we don't know what tragedies are prevented by strong firearms legislation, we will probably never know if our positive interactions will prevent a tragedy. Who knows if the next shooter, unknown to anyone, will find hope and help among friends or through a stranger's kindness? Who knows if kindness can overcome alienation, anger and loneliness? But isn't it worth the effort to try?