



August 6, 2020

Dear USC community,

As you may know, our Vice President of Undergraduate Student Government, Rose Ritch, resigned yesterday from her position in student government. In her heartbreaking resignation letter, Rose described the intense pressure and toxic conditions that led to her decision – specifically the anti-Semitic attacks on her character and the online harassment she endured because of her Jewish and Zionist identities. She also challenged all of us to do better in aligning our actions with our stated desire to have a campus culture that is truly inclusive and respectful of racial and religious diversity, and of different cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

As president of USC, I believe it is critically important to state explicitly and unequivocally that anti-Semitism in all of its forms is a profound betrayal of our principles and has no place at the university. We must condemn any bias or prejudice that is based on a person's race, religion, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristic. What happened to Rose Ritch is unacceptable, and we must all take up her challenge to do better.

Despite the significant progress we have made in cultivating and supporting a vibrant Jewish community on campus, we still wrestle with a history of anti-Semitism at USC. Over the last several years, incidents of anti-Semitism in American higher education have dramatically increased, and anti-Semitic attacks remain the most common religiously motivated hate crime in the United States. As a result, this has been an extremely painful period for our Jewish community.

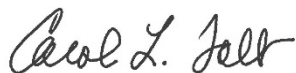
It is more important now than ever for our university to serve as a global beacon of belonging. I'm grateful today to announce a new university-wide initiative launched by the USC Shoah Foundation, ***Stronger than Hate***. This program serves as a call to counter hate with tangible action. It represents the work of many of our university leaders – including students, staff, and faculty – who have come together to support and amplify our collective struggle against hate. Through meaningful exhibitions, programs, and workshops, this initiative is designed to help foster a campus culture of connection and compassion that empowers us to listen, learn, heal,

and dream together. We hope that as we listen to each other, we can move beyond stereotyped beliefs that lead to implicit and explicit biases, and instead foster a respectful and supportive campus culture. We invite everyone to become ***Stronger than Hate*** and to sign up for this important opportunity [here](#).

Over the course of the past year, I have met with many student leaders and groups representing an extraordinary diversity of religious, political, and cultural perspectives, identities, and expressions. I am proud of their courageous commitment to work together on their shared goals and aspirations, and to translate their many gifts and talents into serving and supporting each other. I know that our student leaders will continue to collaborate across disciplines and domains in order to tell new stories and find new solutions to the many crises facing us today.

We all have a shared responsibility to build a truly inclusive campus culture so that all students feel empowered to lead in student government and student organizations, and that means that we all must denounce and dismantle prejudice and hatred whenever and wherever we encounter it and be a force for good.

With gratitude,



Carol L. Folt
President

cc: President's Senior Leadership Team
Academic Deans
Provost's Leadership Team
Academic Senate
Staff Assembly
GSG President
USG President