

**Allegheny Conference on Community Development 2018 Annual Meeting Opening Remarks
Delivered by Bill Demchak, Chair of the Allegheny Conference
And Chairman, President and CEO of The PNC Financial Services Group
Thursday, November 8, 2018**

Twelve days ago, eleven of our neighbors lost their lives, and six others were wounded in an act of unconscionable hate.

It took just moments for the first helpers to arrive on the scene. And in the hours, days and for nearly two weeks since, we've witnessed the helpers in our community show up in force.

They've come together to grieve with one another ... to pray for those who were wounded, those who were lost and for the families that survive them.

They've come together to offer comfort and support ... to express their love for one another and for our community.

They've come together to give us hope ... to lead us on a path to healing and toward a brighter, better future for all.

Good evening. I'm Bill Demchak, chairman of the Allegheny Conference.

Tonight, as we begin our annual meeting, our hearts are still heavy, and our thoughts are with the residents of Thousand Oaks, California, whose pain today we know all too well.

I'm joined on stage by a number of our region's first responders, community leaders and representatives from our region's interfaith community.

In addition to Mayor Peduto and County Executive Fitzgerald, who are here on stage, we're also joined this evening by a number of other elected officials from the 10-county region, as well as leaders from organized labor. And at the front of the room, we have members of the board of the Allegheny Conference.

These are folks we often think of as leaders in our community. But the truth is, if you are here tonight – whether you're at the front of the room or the top of the house – if you have given up your evening to join us and engage in this discussion of issues that matter to our neighbors across this region, then you're a leader, too.

We're gathered here this evening at a moment unlike any other we've ever faced as a community.

We'll get to the business of the Conference in a few minutes – because the work in which we're engaged is important and must continue. But, after something as traumatic as what occurred at Tree of Life, it's important that we take a few minutes together to take stock of who we are and what we stand for.

Now, it's probably not news to any of you that Pittsburgh is not the most diverse region in the country, yet we're known for being one of the friendliest.

Ours is and always will be a community that is welcoming and inclusive. We are a community that prizes compassion and kindness. In the wake of the shooting at Tree of Life, the world has seen members of our community from all faiths and cultures come together without regard for politics or ideology to support and lift up those who are hurting.

That is Pittsburgh. And, just as steel is strengthened by fire, this community has grown stronger and more united as we've faced this terrible trial.

But there is more for us to do. The sad reality is that the pain we have been suffering as a community since the attack at Tree of Life is not new or unfamiliar to those of our neighbors for whom bigotry and even violence are all too much a part of everyday life.

And so this is a moment ... a moment for us to choose a new path for our future and for the future of our children.

This is a moment for us, together, to say that we will never accept the inhumanity of hate ... that we will speak out against it in all of its forms ... and to commit ourselves to action whenever the opportunity presents itself to stand up to intolerance, persecution and oppression.

This is a moment for us to ensure that the prosperity we pursue across our region is truly for all by demonstrating that we will stand up for the dignity of, respect for and kindness toward all.

My wife, who is Jewish, has often reminded me of something that's taken on new meaning in recent days, the role of bystanders in the Holocaust – people who witnessed the persecution of millions of Jews but said and did nothing to stop it and leaders in the international community who were aware of the atrocities but did nothing to intervene.

Bystanders took no action and did their best to deny responsibility even as millions of Jews were murdered. In the decades since, we've come to recognize that they were complicit by their willful inaction.

We cannot be just bystanders in our community. And, fortunately, Pittsburgh has never been a community of mere bystanders.

Seventy-five years ago, when R.K. Mellon proposed the idea for what would become the Allegheny Conference, it wasn't for the good of his business or any other. In fact, he was emphatic that we come together not as heads of companies, but as private citizens concerned for our collective future and the common good.

We are all here tonight because we've chosen paths for ourselves that have brought us to positions of leadership in our respective organizations and in this community.

We have a moral obligation to use our voices and our resources to promote what we value — compassion, hope, inclusivity and tolerance ... and to defend our neighbors, our region and our way of life against the corrosive power of bigotry, fear, hatred and violence.

The shocking attack on peaceful worshippers at Tree of Life is not how our region will be defined. Rather, the strength with which we respond together, the resolve with which we speak together, and

the will with which we stand together – for those things we value and for prosperity for all – is how we as leaders and as a community will be measured.

Please join me in thanking our brave first responders who are here tonight, as well as the leaders from across the faith community who have stood with us this evening in a show of unity. And thank you for standing with us, committed together to building a better tomorrow.