Anti-Muslim vitriol has reached a fever pitch this year. Words matter. At best, this demonizing rhetoric is irresponsible and dishonest. At worst, it is dangerous. The mainstreaming of anti-Muslim hate – like Donald Trump’s call for a ‘total and complete shutdown’ of Muslims entering the United States – is not only harmful to the fabric of our society but can fuel violence.

Next week, some of the candidates who’ve denounced Trump are scheduled to attend a conference organized by Frank Gaffney, the same anti-Muslim extremist who Trump cited in his disgraceful statement. We call on those candidates and other leaders scheduled to attend the National Security Action Summit in Nevada to decline.

Political and community leaders, and the media, must be consistent in forcefully condemning this shameful bigotry.

-Richard Cohen, President, Southern Poverty Law Center