

Fighting hate with blackout poetry

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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So it turns out the Westboro Baptist folks [aren't traveling to Tucson](#) for the funerals of last weekend's shooting victims after all. They are, however, staging an event [today at American University](#) in DC.

How do we respond to Fred

Phelps and his gang of shameless attention seekers? WBC's trademark homophobic vitriol doesn't deserve to be earnestly engaged; the organization aims only to provoke, offend and get on the news. But when these people come to our front doors, can we simply ignore them?

Students in my neighborhood

didn't think so when WBC came calling a while back--they responded, as others have, with [ridiculous signs](#) of their own. Some AU

students are doing them one better: following [this website's](#)

lead, Tara Culp-Ressler [has organized](#) a [group](#) to fight hate with [blackout poetry](#).

Liberally redacted, WBC's vile press releases are transformed into more loving messages:

American University

will see truth,

the face of God.

Your God shall be in thine

heart.

Teach thy children

that simple commandment:

God is love.

I like this response because it's both whimsical and positive, countering WBC's message without taking it seriously. It also strikes me as profoundly hope-filled: God's truth is found even in those places where it's been twisted into ugly lies.