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Included below is a press release regarding Leonard Zeskind, one of the nation's leading experts on white nationalist political and social movements, who will speak at 7 p.m. March 4 in Ferris State University's G. Mennen Williams Auditorium. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Author, Anti-Racism Expert Zeskind to Speak at Ferris State University

BIG RAPIDS – One of the nation's leading experts on white nationalist political and social movements, Leonard Zeskind, will speak at 7 p.m. March 4 in Ferris State University's G. Mennen Williams Auditorium.

The author of *Blood Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*, Zeskind will sign copies of his book at 4 p.m. at Great Lakes Book and Supply prior to his lecture. A Kansas City native and a MacArthur Fellow, Zeskind has been actively calling attention to the hot-button issues of immigration and "illegal aliens," which he contends has helped the white nationalist movement gain mainstream attention in the United States.

Zeskind's lecture, sponsored by Barry Mehler and Ferris' Institute for the Study of Academic Racism, is free to the public courtesy of a mini-grant awarded by the university's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

"Leonard has more knowledge than anyone in the country in following the movements of neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, skinheads and other groups of this kind as they attempt to become more mainstream in an effort to appeal to a broader audience," said Mehler, a professor of history at Ferris, who has known Zeskind since the early 1980s. "It's great for us to be able to bring someone with his knowledge and background to Ferris to speak on such an important topic."

For 30 years, Zeskind has devoted countless hours to researching and writing about white nationalism in America. In 1985, after working to organize white workers and youth against racism, Zeskind became research director of the Anti-Klan Network, based in Atlanta. Later, the organization was renamed the Center for Democratic Renewal, but continued its work documenting and combating the resurgence of the Klan and white nationalism.

"Leonard's analysis of white nationalism is organized, clear and not hard to understand," Mehler said. "Right now, with the debate about immigration issues, white nationalists see an

opportunity to move from the margins of society into the mainstream, as Leonard has written about in his book and discussed in many of his lectures. Leonard has been really courageous in working on this for more than 30 years.”

Also a frequent contributor to the *Huffington Post* and as a television analyst, Zeskind was awarded a 1998 “genius fellowship” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation worth \$295,000 for his work to expose and combat hate groups. Upon being awarded the fellowship, Zeskind told a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, “(White nationalism) is not just a problem for academics to study and do-gooders to do good about. This is a problem for every person who does not want to see this country torn apart.”

For more information about Zeskind’s visit to Ferris, visit www.ferris.edu/isar.

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Leonard Zeskind.jpg

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