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# BECOMING A BELOVED COMMUNITY

## *CONGREGATIONAL TOOLKIT FOR A LONG ISLAND INTERFAITH RESPONSE TO HATE*

**Martin Luther King Weekend - January 13-16, 2023**

*In Dr. King's Beloved Community, "all forms of bigotry ... will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."*



Abraham's Table of Long Island



**Abraham's Table of Long Island**

*"Come together and listen." Genesis 49:2*

**The Beloved Community is a Project of Abraham's Table of Long Island**

**As of October 31, 2022, the project has 82 supporters  
representing 65 Long Island congregations and organizations**

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## INTRODUCTION

# People of Faith Must Act Now to Stop Hate on Long Island

### ***Why Long Island Needs to Become a Beloved Community***

Hate is again on the rise, across the United States and here on Long Island.

- ✓ Despite the fact that many hate crimes go unreported, U.S. Department of Justice data show that in New York State hate crimes rose by 31 percent between 2018 and 2020.
- ✓ In April of this year, the ADL reported that New York State led the nation in antisemitic acts.
- ✓ In late July, vicious antisemitic flyers were distributed on lawns in Rockville Centre.
- ✓ On July 4, a firebomb was thrown at a sacred symbol in front of Fatima Al-Zahra Mosque in Ronkonkoma.
- ✓ In February, a Bayport man was charged with sending dozens of hate-filled letters to Long Island LGBTQ organizations.
- ✓ In January, a Long Island couple faced hate-crime charges after they verbally harassed a Black family.

Sadly, when the Nazis unleashed their reign of terror against Jews, most of the key faith leaders in Germany at that time were silent. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran Pastor, was one of the few Germans who denounced Nazi hatred of the Jews. Pastor Bonhoeffer said this of Nazi hatred: "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." As *Time magazine* reported in an article commemorating Kristallnacht, "*The Holocaust didn't start with killing; it started with words*"

### ***How to Use This Toolkit to Help Us Become a Beloved Community***

"Becoming a Beloved Community: A Long Island Interfaith Response to Hate," is a faith response to the rise in hate that will be coordinated throughout Long Island on Martin Luther King weekend, January 13-16, 2023.

Rabbi Steven Moss, former Chair of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission was one of some 50 faith leaders offered an opportunity to critique the draft toolkit. Rabbi Moss wrote:

*“This is quite an amazing document. I have no doubt that any house of worship or community that is looking for inspirational and instructional material for the MLK weekend will find it here.”*

**The toolkit offers a menu of activities for religious congregations** from Valley Stream to Montauk to speak and act as Dr. King’s “Beloved Community” to stop hate ... now.

**The toolkit contains:**

- ❖ **Scriptural readings and reflections**
- ❖ **Prayers, reflections and sermon notes that can be incorporated into services during MLK weekend**
- ❖ **A reading defining hate crimes and incidents**
- ❖ **Readings with personal and community responses to hate. These readings can be published as bulletin inserts or used in group discussions. Most of the readings contain suggested discussion questions or actions.**

Each congregation is encouraged to select the materials best suited to their needs, be they one or more scripture readings or prayers or the appropriate sermon notes for use during a liturgy or a reading for publication in the congregational bulletin or newsletter or for use in a group discussion or educational program.

***The materials in this toolkit can be used during the MLK weekend of January 13-16, 2023 and/or during the weeks leading up to MLK weekend***, so that we can, in solidarity with one voice and heart, speak and act to stem the rise of hate in our communities ... before it is too late.

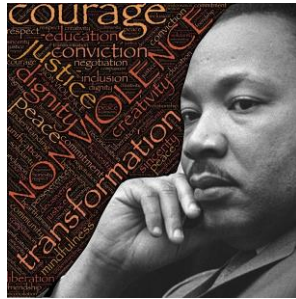
<p><b>The Beloved Community toolkit was edited by Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair, Abraham’s Table of Long Island with the assistance of these members of the Abraham’s Table Steering Committee: Sadri Altinok; Rev. William Brisotti; Vicar Jean Dougherty; Mary Friedman; David Knishkowsky; David Pinkowitz; Bat Sheva Slavin; Alexis Stafford; Sr. Susan Wilcox</b></p>
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## **BECOMING A BELOVED COMMUNITY: A LONG ISLAND INTERFAITH RESPONSE TO HATE**



### **Martin Luther King Weekend - January 13-16, 2023**

***In Dr. King's Beloved Community "all forms of bigotry ... will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."***

During MLK weekend, 2023, Abraham's Table invites Long Island congregations to come together as a united community of conscience, hosting activities that call us to be what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called a "beloved community" as we confront rising acts of hatred in our region and elsewhere in the United States.

#### **Suggested Congregational Anti-Hate Activities**

(Activities 1-7 with an asterisk are included in this anti-hate toolkit)

1. Sermons\*
2. Prayers and petitions\*
3. Bulletin inserts\*
4. Implicit bias educational materials\*
5. Non-judgmental listening exercises\*
6. Table conversations using a discussion guide on how to combat hate\*
7. Tips on how to deal with hateful social media posts\*
8. Tolerance/anti-hate speakers during or after services
9. Victims' witness talks
10. Interfaith conversations to build solidarity (breakfasts)
11. Anti-hate speakers
12. "Ouch" training (strategies on how to respond to hateful speech)
13. Children's poster contest
14. Anti-hate concerts
15. Kickoff Noon luncheons on Friday, January 13 at mosques or kickoff Shabbat dinners at synagogues

An Abraham's Table Island-wide kickoff brunch on January 13

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# INTERFAITH PRAYERS AND REFLECTIONS RESPONDING TO HATE

## Jewish Prayers

### Proverbs 10:12

“Hatred stirs up disputes but love covers all offenses”

Lord, disputes of hate are everywhere. I ask that I extend your love for me into the world of hate when I see it, and somehow diminish it through words and actions that challenge hate.

### Psalm 97:10

This psalm says “The Lord loves those who hate evil”

Lord, evil is hate in many forms: I pray that I recognize the hates of Racism, Antisemitism, Homelessness... so I may bring your love to these forms of hate, perhaps simply by speaking up and challenging what I see or hear.

### A Jewish prayer for healing after a hate crime

After a hate crime at Temple Beth Hatfiloh (Olympia, Washington) that took place on December 22, 2015, Rabbi Seth Goldstein penned a prayer for healing.

*Eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu*

Our God and God of our ancestors,  
Hate has been visited upon our community

Our sacred space has been violated.

We feel vulnerable, afraid, angry and broken.

God and God of our ancestors,  
We pray to You:

May strength come from our vulnerability,  
so we can support one another,  
and receive the support of others with gratitude and humility.

May compassion come from our fear,  
so we do not act from that fear,  
and we can pursue justice not revenge,  
peace not more violence.

May wisdom come from our anger,  
so we are able to see that an attack against us is an attack against all,  
and we are able to join in common cause with those who are similarly oppressed and targeted.

And may healing come from our brokenness,  
so we are able to rise from this challenge with renewed life,  
commitment and connection.

God and God of our ancestors,  
In light of this act of violence and hatred,

We maintain our commitment to be *shearit Yisrael*, the remnant of Israel Lit. "the one who struggles with God." *Israel means many things. It is first used with reference to Jacob, whose name is changed to Israel (Genesis 32:29), the one who struggles with God. Jacob's children, the Jewish people, become B'nai Israel, the children of Israel. The name also refers to the land of Israel and the State of Israel.,*

Continually upholding the teachings and traditions of Your covenant,  
Pursuing righteousness and compassion,  
Justice and mercy,  
Peace and understanding,  
Love and friendship.

May You frustrate those who seek to do harm  
And uphold those who seek to do good.  
May the shelter of Your peace spread over us and over all who dwell on earth.

And let us say, Amen.

Source: Ritualwell



## Christian Prayers

Gracious and eternal God, I bring to you my unsettled spirit, my disillusionment, and my yearning for peace on Long Island. Conflicts seem to have taken on a life of their own. Like a fire, it blazes

and sweeps through our communities. Division grows among us. We have lost the trust and creativity that has helped us to have a strong community. Come help us, O God. Show us the way to break through our paralysis. Lead us into responsible paths for resolution. Give us grace to speak with truth and charity. Help me and each of us to examine ourselves honestly, to discern what responsibility we may have for the state of our community. Give us courage to enter into peacemaking. Help us to let go of our pride and accept help from others. Free us from making people into scapegoats. Bring us to repentance. Teach us what we need to learn. Move our hearts to rediscover the strong bonds that you have built among us. May your Spirit move among us. Heal us as a community. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen. [Women's Uncommon Prayers, (Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, 2000), pg. 258]

Gracious God, lead our enemies and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge, and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen. [excerpt from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 2006) pg. 80]

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## Muslim Prayers

"Do not let your hatred of a people incite you to aggression" (5:2). "Do not let ill-will towards any folk incite you so that you deviate from dealing justly. Be just; that is nearest to heedfulness" (5:8).

"Whosoever of you sees injustice, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able



to do so, then with his heart (a Hadith (tradition) from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him - pbuh):



(unsplash)

## Interdenominational Prayers and Reflections

Grant, O God, that your holy life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace. Amen. *[Excerpt from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 2006) pg. 79]*

God, our refuge and strength, you have bound us together in common life. In all our conflicts, help us to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, to listen for your voice amid competing claims and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect. Amen. *[Excerpt from Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 2006) pg. 76]*

Scripture says "to love your neighbor as yourself."  
I pray that I can love myself so that I am

free to love others as you do.  
Then I will be able to confront and overcome hateful situations with love.

"My light shines on every situation you will face"

Lord, I pray I'm aware of the light you shine on me so that through dialogue and witness, I can bring that light to places where hate exists. ("Jesus Calling," January 19, 2022)

"Men often hate each other because they fear each other;  
they fear each other because they don't know each other;  
they don't know each other because they cannot communicate;  
they cannot communicate because they are separated."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dear God,

There is so much division and hate coming from fear and keeping us from loving one another. Help us break down those walls that divide us, and instead build bridges, so that we may be able to come together to communicate with each other. With openness and respect, may we truly try to listen and understand one another, so that we may come to know each other, and work to build the beloved community.

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



### ***Dr. King on Loving the Hater***

“In speaking of love, we are not referring to some sentimental emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. ... When we speak of loving those who oppose us ... we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word Agape. Agape means nothing sentimental or basically affectionate; it means understanding, redeeming goodwill for all people, an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. ... Agape is the love of God operating in the human

heart. The greatness of it is that you love every person, not for your sake but for [their] sake. And you love every person because God loves each person. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community. ... And the only testing point for you to know whether you have real genuine love is that you love your enemy. ... Therefore, if I respond to hate with a reciprocal hate I do nothing but intensify the cleavages of a broken community. ... Within the best of us, there is some evil, and within the worst of us, there is some good. ... Discover the element of good in your enemy. And as you seek to hate him or her, find the center of goodness and place your attention there and you will take a new attitude. ... Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. ... “

(Composite statements by Dr. King on the power of love.)

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## INTERFAITH PETITIONS CALLING FOR LOVE RATHER THAN HATE

***These petition prayers can be inserted into a liturgy at any point or specifically during certain points such as the Christian Offertory***

That we may break down the walls of fear that divide us, causing so much suspicion and hate, and instead build bridges, coming together in openness and respect, to communicate with love, and help build the beloved community...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Open the eyes of our hearts, O Lord, so that we may not only see and feel your love and mercy but carry that love and mercy to those who may be burdened with hate. Help us to bring light, love, and healing to those who dwell in that darkness of hatred ...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Dear God, Help us to never resort to returning hate for hate. Grant us the wisdom, patience, and compassion to always be able to speak and act with love in response to any hatred ...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

That no matter how people have been taught or have learned to hate, help us, O Lord, to always seek to meet that hatred with the greater power of love, for we know that you have created us to love one another ...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

Dear God, you have heard your people cry from the hatred that sears our souls and tears us apart. Break our hearts of stone, we pray, and give us hearts for love alone...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

That you may always guide us to walk in love, no matter the hate that may surround us...

*Lord, hear our prayer.*

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# SERMON NOTES

## Jewish

### *On the Rise of Antisemitism*



**Rabbi David Steinhardt, B'nai Torah Synagogue, Boca Raton, Florida**

[The full sermon can be accessed at: <https://www.btcboca.org/category/rabbi-steinhardts-blog/>]

I'm going to speak about one of those struggles which we thought would have gone away but have witnessed too vividly that it has not. And so, despite all the changes we see, we once again are faced and challenged by anti-Semitism. Many believed that after the Shoah we wouldn't see it raise its perverse head again, but it has. It is a hatred that never goes away.

It is pervasive in Europe and universities. It is being given a new, large platform through the Internet. Yesterday in the New York Times we saw that even the California surfer culture has Nazi symbols. And this year many people asked me to speak about it.

Our country was conceived in liberty and founded on the idea that all people are created equal. "No sanction is given to bigotry," in the words of George Washington. There are a constitution and laws that protect us and all minorities. We were welcomed as new immigrants and helped build this nation. There is a government built on a balance of power which is intended to protect rights and freedoms and defend the law. There is legislation against hate crimes. Make no mistake about it, these are different times. Because of Israel and because of America.

Yet, there were other times when we felt secure and were well integrated in society. Anti-Semitism grew into a force in a nation where we were well assimilated, and it led to

the murder of six million. We know the deep-rooted nature of anti-Semitism in the hearts of those who hate.

We have seen an exponential rise in hate crimes since the election in 2016. We also are witness to the expression of hatred towards others – Muslims, Latinos, and African-Americans. Yet, the rise in hate crimes is disproportionately against Jews.

Years ago, when speaking about terrorism I quoted a line that became a popular metaphor. We are the canaries in the mine. We know that when we are attacked it is only a short time before others are attacked and the essential aspects of freedom and human rights are also attacked. We've heard so often the writing of Pastor Niemöller: First they came for the Jews.

We sit here a little more than a year after the chanting of white nationalists/neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, Virginia that “the Jews will not replace us” and less than a year after the massacres at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh and in Poway, San Diego. Those were the first mass killing of Jews in the history of this country. It's all pretty sickening.

Things change in the world. And yet, anti-Semitism continues.

Looking at this from the place of Torah we see in the Book of Exodus that there is a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. Our existence then, in a separate place, an area known as Goshen, caused suspicion. Our population growth created fear, resentment, and hatred that led to our enslavement.

People fear the unknown. That leads to resentment and hatred. Pharaoh viewed us as a fifth column. That is a pattern repeated as we remain separate; a Biblical story replayed throughout our history.

Later in the Book of Exodus as we wandered in the wilderness we were attacked by Amalek. It appears to be “just because.” Amalek becomes the symbol of evil and hatred that has no purpose. He attacked the weak and the vulnerable. You see, throughout history we have been hated because we were weak; however, we have also been hated when we were strong.

Our roles in business, banking, and lending money – often for the Church –created hatred. Being that we were not just a religious group, but a people scattered around the world, gave us great advantage during periods of trading. During the period of the Dutch Trading Company, we became wealthy, and our wealth invited resentment.

We were blamed because we were socialists, and we were blamed because we were capitalists. We were rich and that was bad; and we were poor and that was bad.

So, where do we go with this?

We know it will never be eradicated completely. Anti-Semitism is irrational. It even exists in places where there are no Jews. Sometimes it is marginally hidden, as is the case in Holocaust denial. But other times it is right in our faces.

The first rule of Jewish ethics is contained in the question:

*Im ein ani li mi li?* If I am not for myself who will be?

This is where the story I told about Eddie Balkin comes in: We must be strong and active.

When there's an incidence of anti-Semitism, shout it out. Report it to law enforcement. Contact the agencies of the Jewish and larger community that deal with hatred and racism. Support our agencies that fight anti-Semitism and racism. Neither we nor they can ignore it.

Leaders and elected officials need to be very clear on the nature of anti-Semitism and they need to reject it outright. Tolerance for any form of discrimination opens the door to anti-Semitism. Leaders must set the moral tone. There can be no messages that make it seem like there are good guys on the side of the anti-Semites. There are no good Nazis.

We cannot allow ourselves to be victims again. True strength is physical, but it is also intellectual, spiritual and psychological.

We need to educate. Holocaust education and education about difference –including anti-Semitism and racism and other phobic responses to people – must be taught to be eradicated. The Nazis didn't only destroy us, they destroyed Germany and Europe. Every nation that once flourished with strong Jewish communities – when their Jews suffered oppression and were forcibly exiled – those nations failed. It destroys cultures and civilization.

We should not look at our suffering or the hatred we experience as if we are the only people who suffer. It is simply not the case. Whether you are a Muslim sitting in a detention camp in China as a member of the Rohingya tribe or a person with different sexual or gender orientation; whether you are black or an immigrant, or in many cases and in particular societies, a woman: there is hatred experienced, violence known and suffering imposed.

We are taught by our tradition that our own suffering is not meant for our self-pity or revenge but rather to sensitize ourselves and the world, to engage others, to fight evil, to empathize with the stranger. It is an essential meaning of being Jewish.

Emotional maturity is called for. We must understand that the world isn't simply us and them. Not every non-Jew is an anti-Semite. Not every critique of a Jew or Israel is anti-Semitic. We can't be screaming anti-Semite when it simply is not that. We can't allow ourselves to become overly defensive or fearful. Rather we are called upon to be confident and strong.

Our experiences could make us resentful and defensive, reactive and even paranoid. When one is abused, and there is no treatment, they are likely to become abusers. We cannot become abusers. Being hated or oppressed should not turn us into being a hateful people. We need to protect our own souls. We are survivors, not victims.

We must not be alone in this battle. They and their coreligionists are with us! People of different color and different faiths. The gathering took place within thirty-six hours after the attack. It is because of the work that we do. Getting to know each other, respecting each other, working together to build something better.

Can we end anti-Semitism? We can't. It is a part of this world. But there are things we can do, and there are ways we must stand.

There's a Midrash that compares Sinai the word, with the word, *Sinah*. Sinai, the place where we became a people covenanted with God. There we experienced the Divine. Sinai. *Sinah* means hatred. It was, according to the rabbis, because of Sinai that we were hated. Sinai made us different.

Sinai created a different new way of looking at the world and being in the world. It meant rejecting ultimate human power. It meant the rejection of idolatry, which was the worship of power and materialism, then and now. Through Sinai, we found a way to the transcendent, and so Sinai took us to that which is aspirational.

It created a sense of responsibility, and that meant human obligation for more than the self. Through Sinai, we discovered that we were a holy people, a nation of priests in the world. And it created hatred.

It was the beginning of learning and the commitment to truth. We received a document of freedom and justice, kindness and compassion.

Sinai gave us aspirations of what we could model for the world. And it gave us responsibilities to improve the world as it is. But it also made us different. Anyone can come to Sinai and become different. That is who we are.

### ***On Overcoming Polarization***



#### **Rabbi Ian Silverman, East Northport Jewish Center**

Polarization in the present: need it be in the future?

There is... a deep cost to our present polarization ... Zaid Jilani and Jeremy Adam Smith in an article on line from Berkeley University tell us, "Polarization is not the same as disagreement about how to solve public policy problems, which is healthy and natural in a democracy. Polarization is about more than just having a different opinion

than your neighbor about certain issues. It occurs when *we refuse to live next door to a neighbor who doesn't share our politics, or when we won't send our children to a racially integrated school*. The force that empowers polarization is tribalism: clustering ourselves into groups that compete against each other in a zero sum game, where negotiation and compromise are perceived as betrayal, whether those groups are political, racial, economic, religious, gender or generational.

The impact of polarized viewpoints can be seen not only in politics but laces its way into the work place, and even into, schools, neighborhoods and families, and of course, into religious communities. Further, the pandemic has only worsened our sense of isolation, who is and isn't in our inner circle. We've been further walled off by social media opinions and misinformation, and the main media outlets have become balkanized echo chambers reinforcing our opinions and assumptions again and again and dismissing the arguments of the 'others'. A study illustrates that people judge and loathe more the members of other political parties, framing them as enemies and adversaries rather than Americans with different opinions. At one time in 1960, 10% of the political advertising was negative about the opponent. 90% extolled the positions of the campaign. By 2016, it was 86% negative ads. Our families are being affected by this polarized thinking.

What does Judaism have to say in regard to polarized thinking and how can it help us to avoid its perils and excesses?

Rigid position and extreme viewpoints were always questioned in Judaism. For one thing Jews have always questioned authority and conventional thinking. Abraham stood alone against idolatry, the conventional and pervasive theology in his day. God Himself was also not above reproach. Abraham at Sodom and Gomorrah challenged God and advocated that His actions be just rather than rash. "Would the judge of all the earth not do justly" he asks. "Would you sweep up the innocent with the guilty?"

There is no taboo in Judaism against questioning-- even to question God. All the more so, shouldn't we question and examine orthodoxies and conventional answers of others and even our own ideas? ... A true sage must know how to turn things and weave meanings and draw parallels and argue from major to minor and minor to major.

The schools of Hillel and Shammai were quite different and their approaches to Jewish law was different. But the House of Hillel generally wins favor because of the manner of their disagreeing. They always mentioned the school of Shammai's position first even if they disagreed. And even in a matter of matrimonial law on which they differed, they still accepted the offspring of one another as suitable brides and grooms. Their divisions and opinions differed but it did not stop them from considering themselves a one Jewish people. You can agree to disagree and still embrace and even love the other.

How are we to develop such an ability of hearing the other out and hearing arguments that we fundamentally disagree with? Not an easy thing! Rabbi Micha Goodman suggests "radical listening" a concept developed by the great Harvard feminist



philosopher Carol Gilligan. What is radical listening? It's not only listening intently. It's listening with an open heart-- with a commitment to understand and conceptualize the thought process of the person speaking and putting aside "judgmentalism".

Moral Judaism boiled down to three simple words is: *Dan Lkhaf Zchut* -Give someone the benefit of the doubt. Judge them favorably. Atticus Finch, a character in "To Kill a Mockingbird," said the same when he implored to Scout, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from her point of view ... until you climb inside of her skin and walk around in it". We have been applying biases when judging and coming to conclusions without all the facts. Such a simple lesson, and yet, so hard to apply." But it's a lesson that we must focus upon, on this Yom HaDin this day of Judgment.

Judging a person 'lekaf Zechut' means trying to see the issue from many different angles so as to understand a person's passion or pain behind their viewpoint, *how it is that he or she thinks he or she is right*, rather than to think of reasons why you think he or she is wrong. It's bearing witness to another person's values and life experience; its agreeing to disagree, but with the intent also of embracing rather than disengaging and disowning.

Is it easy? No! it's far more comfortable and easier to remain in one's echo chamber and cling to one's silo of belief and information. But this polarization is corroding our social fabric and it's affecting our communities, our neighborhoods, our society, our workplace. And it's an issue that erodes Kehilla, the notion that each and every one of us is areivim zeh ba zeh...bound up in each other's destiny. Rav Kook, the great Chief Rabbi of pre-State of Israel, derided his own group for their extremism when they vilified the secular Jews around them, even though they violated the Shabbat by working, by driving and by smoking. First, he argues, these secular Zionists are providing the spiritual space for us religious Jews by their productive energies, and second, a faction who concentrates only on the faults of other factions, is certain to be blind to its own group's faults.

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## Christian

### *On Our Call to be Prophets*



**Fr. William Brisotti, Pastor Emeritus, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal RC Church, Wyandanch**

**[Based on the Common Lectionary readings for January 15, 2023: Isaiah 49:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42]**

Today we're invited to listen to the bible readings. As MLK would hear them, be enlightened, motivated, **now**. In today's Mass, we see the humanity of the great prophets. To understand more fully our **Isaiah** reading, we need to restore a verse omitted in today's reading: *"I thought I had toiled in vain, and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength."*

He is convinced he's failed in the mission God gave him to do. Yet, God isn't worried about the prophet's failure. Still, despite his people not listening, Isaiah is still certain: *"My right is with the Lord; my recompense is with my God."*

Disciples of God need a different value system regarding discipleship, and what is **'success'** or **'failure.'** They can't use the common measurements of the world. While seeming to fail, he still realizes *"I am honored in the sight of the Lord and my God is now my strength."*

Yahweh's glory has been shown in Isaiah's failure. God didn't need Isaiah's personal success, only his trust. And the prophet then receives an even larger mission: *"It is too little for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel (to what they **were**), "I will make you a light to the nations (Gentiles), that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (to what all humanity **will be**).*

**John's Gospel** gives us John the Baptist's account of the Baptism of Jesus *"He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."*

But things didn't turn out the way John had anticipated. Hence John, later imprisoned, sends his disciples to question Jesus: *"Are you he who is to come, or must we wait for another?"*

His preaching didn't fulfill God's way, as John understood it. It simply hastened his own martyrdom. He may have seen this as a sign he'd failed in his task. But we know that's not the case.

There are many parallels here with the life of MLK

Prophets needn't realize the fulfillment of Kingdom. The Holy Spirit accomplishes that. And that involves us, among the faith descendants of the great prophets. The first Christian communities understood: the baptism of Jesus conveys his Spirit – to cleanse, renew & transform the hearts, and subsequently the lives, of his followers. Without that Spirit of Jesus, the Church fades away. Only the Spirit of Jesus can inspire today's Christianity, lead us to abandon paths that distract from the Gospel.

And only the Spirit can give us light and strength to undertake the daunting tasks of today.

Pope Francis knows that the greatest obstacle to new evangelizing is '**spiritual mediocrity**'. He encourages a *"life more ardent, joyful, generous, daring, full of love to the end, and contagious."* For this, *"the fire of the Spirit (must) burn in hearts"*. the Church needs *"evangelizers with the Spirit"* who open themselves in practical ways, without fear to embrace the Spirit of Jesus

*"The strength to announce Gospel truth, boldly, loudly, Always, and in all places, even against the currents."* The renewal that the Pope wants is not possible *"When the lack of a deep spirituality translates into pessimism, fatalism, and mistrust"*, leading us to think *"Nothing can change"* so *"it is useless make an effort"*,

For MLK the 'Beloved Community' is not a political strategy, but rather a way of living a deep spirituality. It's an incorrigible recognition: our loving, healing, unifying God is within every element of creation, especially people, each created *"in God's image and likeness"*.

It is our task to deepen our perceptions of the Spirit to enlighten the superficial perceptions that engender hate speech and the horrible actions that follow. And while hate crimes must be prosecuted by law, we, as people of faith, must grow stronger in MLK's spirit & practice of nonviolence: *"Nonviolence is the way of the strong. The goal of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. Nonviolence seeks to defeat evil, not people. Nonviolence includes a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation. Nonviolence avoids not only external physical violence, but also internal violence of spirit. It is unconditional love in action. Nonviolence is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice."*

Thus, King's philosophy & spirituality are rooted in HOPE. May we all be able to say, with MLK, from today's psalm 40: *"I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you, O Lord, know"*.

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### *“If Not Now, When?”*

**E. Magalene McClarrin**  
Commissioned Ruling Elder  
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Lord, while You were blessing others, we thank You for stopping by here to bless us with Your presence. In the midst of the storms of war, hatred, greed, selfishness, we look to You to give us strength to stand in the gap for others who cannot stand for themselves. We renounce the prejudice in our own hearts towards others; we reject our own need to be first and center instead of leading with a servant heart. We thank You Lord for grace to hear and speak. We thank You for Jesus. And it is in His Name we pray.

Luke 4:18-19. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”. God’s word for God’s people.

Church, our time has come. IF NOT NOW, THEN WHEN? We can no longer hide under a blanket of deceit, wearing rose colored glasses of denial. We have all fallen short of God’s glory; we have gone our own way, accepting the easy lie, swallowing alternative facts, and believing in the myth that things are so much better, and there is no real race problem in America. If there is, it’s someone else’s problem.

God has put us here for such a time as this. We can no longer play hide and seek with truth and justice. We can no longer afford to be bamboozled, hoodwinked, flummoxed, baffled, duped. As Christians we are called to follow Jesus Christ, and when we profess that we do, then we must see the cross of Jesus not simply as the old rugged cross but a burning cross of shame that we have carried around for centuries. This is not the cross Jesus demands and invites us to carry. His burden is light, His cross, a regal, righteous one of suffering and redemption. He invites us to follow Him and take up a cross of love instead of a beam that is burdened with racism and white supremacy. His cross is an intersection of justice and righteousness. Jesus loved us to death; He demands we love each other to life by loving our neighbors as ourselves. To see the other person in ourselves; to feel the other’s pain and suffering and to experience the joy of lifting and elevating our siblings.

Thomas Merton said, "A theology of love cannot afford to be sentimental. It cannot afford to preach edifying generalities about charity, while identifying 'peace' with mere established power and legalized violence against the oppressed. A theology of love cannot be allowed to merely serve the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence, and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and underprivileged to practice patience, meekness, longsuffering and to solve their problems, if at all, nonviolently.

Racism is the ugly truth that invades and permeates our daily lives. We can't get around it; we can't step over it; we can't go through it. It lives in our institutions and shrouds our culture. It is the boogey man that haunts black and brown people's waking moments. It is the elephant in the room with a distorted memory; the bull in the china shop that shatters any feeble attempts at working through our race problem. It is carbon monoxide that hangs over our institutions, silently killing the hopes of our Nubian and sepia brothers and sisters by denying opportunities, stunting their children's future with inferior schools, corralling them into polluted communities. It is even more deadly than COVID and its variants because it is insidious and embedded in all our institutions from our churches to the state houses to the White House.

Luke 4:18-19 echoes Matthew 25's imperative. We build congregational vitality by coming together, sharing, and celebrating our diversity in worship experiences rather than segregating ourselves; we commit to dismantling structural racism by conscientiously peeling away the layers that have cloaked our denominations in unfairness and inequality: how we distribute monies, the paucity of black participation in decision-making positions. And we eradicate poverty with more than food pantries but by impacting the policies that flood minority communities with high concentration of welfare recipients, foster children, poorly funded schools, redlining, and gerrymandering. We need to advocate and influence local and state politicians, demanding their help with creating and funding programs, like jobs for youth, health initiatives for communities of color, minority business opportunities, and healthy environments.

This is a time for lament, for public sorrow and mourning over the pervasiveness and destructiveness of racism that denies equity, fairness, and justice to some, while others benefit from the privilege and advantage that racism affords them.

Regardless of one's abhorrence of racism, notwithstanding if you are a white, good-fearing person, the fact is that as a white person, my beloved sibling, you benefit from the slave labor and wealth accumulated by the exploitation of your black siblings over a 400-year period. Cry out to the Lord; leave your gifts at the altar and find the brother who has been damaged and reconcile with him; find the sister who has been wounded and seek repair. For God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ and committed to each of us the message of reconciliation.

My Nubian and sepia siblings, we need to release our pain through public acknowledgement; we need to lament the ways we have been wounded intentionally and

unintentionally and thereby gain release. Public lament in sacred and safe spaces where together, black, brown, and white, bring our woundedness to the altar to allow the Holy Spirit to heal and revive us as needed. Where we listen to each other's songs of pain and hope, where we honor each other's truths, with a small "t," where we seek to find, individually, that common space in all of us, so we can be community together.

Where we recognize that no one is whole without the other, the body of Christ is more than the sum of its parts. It is the lifeblood of the church; it is the embodiment of God on earth; the symbol of God's grace that the world so desperately needs to see and believe in. We are that symbol when we come together to do the hard work of bringing racial equity and diversity to our communities. Where we know and believe and act on Luke 4 by preaching the gospel to the poor through recognizing the disparities in access to capital and financial security for African Americans, where we acknowledge the centuries of broken heartedness African Americans have experienced with the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. We preach deliverance for those who are caught in the web of poverty by demanding better schooling and job opportunities. Where we dispel the blindness that keeps our white siblings in darkness when they believe that racism does not exist, or that blacks are so much better off today than ever before. Or when we help them get rid of the notion that they are untouched or uninfluenced by racism when they sincerely believe "I'm not racist; that's the other guy; or help them to understand that they are not bad people if they don't embrace every black person they know.

Siblings, we are a balm in Gilead to heal the bruised when we acknowledge the existence of racism and white privilege that pervade our every waking moment through our institutions and systems and the inequality they engender; now is the acceptable time of the Lord; we need to find Him while He may be found and preach the good news of Jesus that He died for all, that we are a covenant people with God and each other, that we are to love one another, and that the social construct of race is a fallacy and fake news.

We are called to become the beloved community and can only do so when we shed the shackles of racism and white supremacy. Though a difficult and treacherous road we trod, we must commit. Though we have trod a road watered with our tears and stained with the blood of the slaughtered, God has brought us thus far on the way. By His might He is leading us to the light if we just yield and obey. For there is no other way. Acknowledgement brings us to an apology that yields forgiveness, offering all of us, white, black, brown siblings in Christ to walk the walk and talk the talk of reconciliation and reparations that will take the form that best fits our time.

Let us take the Damascus road, allowing God to remove the scales that blind us, to soften the rigid parts of our hearts, and give us revelatory grace to do as Jesus would and did, working tirelessly for a more just society. Shadowed beneath His hand, may we forever stand together, true to our God and true to each other by the power of the BREAD of Life who will bring racial equity and diversity here among us.

So, I ask again, If not now, then when?

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## Muslim

### *There is No Place for Hate and Racism in Islam*



Compiled by Imam Gazi Aga, NEICC

#### Racism Defined

Racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another; that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics. Such racist attitudes are abhorred and condemned in Islam.

God says in the Quran:

**“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware. (49:13)**

In reading this verse we understand that this message is not just for Muslims only; God is addressing all of humanity. As Muslims we are taught that we are one brotherhood, which is part of a larger brotherhood of humanity.

#### No Racism in Islam

Islam rejects all artificial and man-made marks of distinction. No one can claim any superiority over the other based on race, color, language or wealth. This is emphasized in the last sermon of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); it shows a high regard of humanity irrespective of color or race:

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve; an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action.”

One story relays that a man once visited the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque in Madinah; then he saw a group of people sitting and discussing their faith together. Among them were Salman (who came from Persia), Suhaib who grew up in the Eastern Roman empire and was regarded as a Greek, and Bilal who was an African. The man then said:

“If the (Madinan) tribes of Aws and Khazraj support Muhammad, they are his people (that is, Arabs like him). But what are these people doing here?”

The Prophet didn't like this. He went to the mosque and summoned people to prayer where he addressed them saying:

“O people know that the Lord and Sustainer is One. Your ancestor is one, your faith is one. The Arabism of anyone of you is not from your mother or father. It is no more than a tongue (language). Whoever speaks Arabic is an Arab.”

### **Racism is Ugly**

As Muslims, it is fundamental we believe that discriminatory exclusion based on race is alien to the spirit of our faith; in turn we should raise our children with this belief. We should instill in them that there are no excuses or reasons for racism. It's just wrong. Racism is ugly. It divides people into us and them, based on where we come from or the color of our skin. And it happens when people feel that it's acceptable to treat others badly as they go about their daily lives.

God created us from one man and one woman meaning then that we are all the same. We must understand that God is the One who made human beings into different groups and people. These differences are not wrong, but rather a sign from God. God says in the Quran:

**“And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and colors. Surely in this are signs for those of sound knowledge. (30:22)**

We notice that not one word equivalent to race is used in this or any other verse of the Quran.

### **We Are Equal**

Islam teaches that the only source of preference or greatness among human beings is not on a national or group level, but it is at the individual level. In this regard there are two things important to keep in mind: self-examination and self-correction. We should constantly check our attitude toward others; we should examine ourselves carefully, and we should correct ourselves immediately when we find we are in the wrong.

One individual who is higher in piousness, more conscious of his Creator and is staying away from the bad and doing the good is better, no matter what nation, country, or caste he is part of. Individual piety is the only thing that makes a person better and greater than the other one.

The Prophet Muhammad teaches:

**Whoever has pride in his heart equal to the weight of an atom shall not enter Paradise. A man inquired about a person who likes to wear beautiful clothes and fine shoes, and he answered: God is beautiful and likes beauty. Then he**



## **explained pride means rejecting the truth because of self-esteem and looking down on other people. (Muslim)**

We learn that the idea of universal responsibility is the simple fact that all others' desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering. We must realize that to be born a human being is a rare event in itself; and it is wise to use this opportunity as effectively and skillfully as possible.

We must have the proper perspective that the happiness or glory of one person or group is not sought at the expense of others. This is the very essence of Islam and its teachings.

Prophet Muhammad said that all humans are descended from Adam, and Adam from dust. As such, no earthly factors contribute to nobility; the noblest and the most pious. Muslims expressed their piety through their commitment to a truly egalitarian state structure.

The example of pre- and post-Islamic Mecca demonstrates that racism is a product of social and political factors.

### **What can we do against racism:**

1. Watch and read the "I Have a Dream" Speech.  
Compare this with the Prophet's last sermon, especially where he said, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also, a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over a white- except by piety and good action."
2. Discuss the need to stand up against racism, even today.  
Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement he led did not translate into a complete end of racism. Racism has been part of the United States, and other societies, for centuries.
3. Also useful would be a discussion of racism within the Muslim community and how this, too, must be challenged if we are to truly live our faith. An honest discussion of what we can do to rid ourselves of this cancer remains necessary, even though there has been acknowledgment of the problem over the years.
4. Participate in a service project.  
Many communities across the United States commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by hosting a Day of Service, encouraging residents to participate in worthy causes, like volunteering at a soup kitchen, donating blood, or cleaning up park. Do your part by not only participating individually or with your family, but, if possible, members of the Masjid you attend or an Islamic school or organization

you are part of. Speak and serve there to represent your community.

5. Mosque and school talk.

Some Masjids offer short talks after prayers or Islamic study circles. The talking points mentioned in tip number two above can be adapted for this purpose. The same can be done in Islamic weekend schools.

Moderation is an Islamic way of life, which condemns any types of extremism, wastefulness and fanaticism. “Since the Noble Prophet (Upon whom be blessings and peace) was created with a most moderate character and in the most perfect form, his actions and rest all proceeded on moderation and equanimity. His biography clearly shows that in all his actions he proceeded with moderation and equanimity, avoiding excess and negligence.”

No one is immune from racism, islamophobia, antisemitism, xenophobia etc.

**Let’s pray for peace! Let’s pray for each other! Let’s pray for change! Let’s pray for unity!**

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## Unitarian

### *Seeing Beyond Hate*



**The Rev. Kevin Tarsa, Unitarian Universalist Community of the Mountains, Grass Valley, CA**

[The full sermon can be accessed at:

<https://www.uugrassvalley.org/sermon/seeing-beyond-hate/> ]

In reaction to the white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, with its violence and its participants’ Nazi and anti-Jewish chants of “blood and soil” and “Jews will not replace us,” our national and private conversations in response have been focused on hate – hate groups, hate speech, hate crimes, hate violence, and fear of the same.

I want to take issue with the popular focus on hate, for the sake of our political, our emotional and our spiritual health and well-being, and I want to invite us to invest, long term, in more productive and helpful focal points and framings that are anchored in our UU faith tradition.

After the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, a commentator on American Public Radio noted that a number of her friends were lamenting to her that the white nationalist rally and its violence were so un-American, they couldn't understand how it could happen. She explained to them that what happened in Charlottesville was, on the contrary, thoroughly American, rooted in a history of violence from the very beginning, a violent history of erasure, that has been "accepted, even celebrated," violence based on the promoted superiority of one group over another, violence that ensures the power of one group over another, violence against anyone whose behavior or full presence might mess up or jeopardize that world of superiority and domination constructed in our nation. Here's the point: Thinking that hate is the issue, obscures the realities we need to see beneath or behind hate.

I would name three of the ways that a focus on hate comes between us and what we need to see.

First – in the U.S. we tend to think of hate as an attribute of individuals – a "personal prejudice held and perpetrated by individual extremists, loners, and misfits . Even when people are in groups, as in Charlottesville, we are likely to think of them as collection of individually hate-possessed people in need of individual reform.

But if we treat hate as the malady of an individual, we won't see the systemic nature of the violence behind that hate, the language, the stories, the movies and images, the laws and policies and sanctioned behaviors that reinforce status quo relationships of superiority in ways that generate hate violence as an enforcement mechanism.

Second – We tend to believe that hate is something that resides in other people – not us ... exclusive to ignorant bigots. Though as human beings we may have to be taught to hate in particular ways, we all have the capacity for hate, for intense animosity, for stomping when our world is in jeopardy. As long as we believe that we don't personally have the capacity to hate, we are vulnerable to wielding hate unawares. We won't see the subtle ways in which our behaviors perpetrate racism, or violence against women or immigrant others.

And Third – We tend to believe that hate violence is considered unacceptable to respectable society [in America]. People express shock at the white nationalist rallies, but, what if hate violence is not an aberration, what if hate violence represents community norms ?

If we stop and pause before jumping to a label of hate, to notice what's behind it, where it comes from beyond the individual person, beyond the other/the monster that's not us, beyond what we expect are acceptable societal norms, to see what we really need to see: a several hundred-year culture of superiority and domination, held in place by systemic, implicitly sanctioned violence. Framing the issue as hate obscures that.

Then, if not hate, what are we to call upon as our focus instead? To close, I will urge us to change our language of justice from [a language] of HATE to [a language] of public goodness.

Our society suffers from what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called maladies of the spirit ... spiritual disorders that prevent society from thinking coherently about justice and goodness in ways that dismantle beliefs and structures rooted in an ethic of domination.

One malady upon which many other disorders rest is a lack of trust. The roots of fear and hatred are located in the absence of trust: trust in others, trust in our communities, trust in ourselves, and trust in ability to do good. And why should we trust, given our nation's history?

Rather than focusing on hate, evil and enemies, lift up new ways of understanding and living Goodness and Justice. ... Because American society focuses on fear and exclusion, not on the positive creation of caring and just communities, one way to be transformatively disruptive would be to undertake a radical and compassionate embrace of the Neighbor.

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# Responding to Hate: Information and Resources From the Anti-Defamation League

The entire article can be accessed at: <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/responding-to-hate-information-and-resources>

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *This article outlines legal definitions of hate crimes and hate incidents as well as how to report them.*

- 1. Describe a situation in which you were the victim of a hate crime or incident? How did you react? To whom did you report it? Were you reluctant to report it? Why? Did you get support?**
- 2. What tensions are there between the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of freedom of speech and legal attempts to suppress hate?**
- 3. Monitor Newsday and other media for reports of hate crimes and incidents.**

- **Who were the victims?**
- **What was the hateful action?**
- **What were the community, police and other government responses?**
- **What would you do to prevent a repeat of this behavior?**



Jason Leung (unsplash)

## What is a Hate Crime?

A hate crime is any crime motivated in whole or in part by bias, prejudice or bigotry. The U.S. Government, 45 states, and the District of Columbia have hate crime laws. They provide increased penalties for crimes intentionally directed at individuals or institutions because of their personal characteristics.

All hate crime laws cover crimes where the victim is targeted because of his or her race, religion or national origin. Many of these laws also cover crimes committed because of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.

There are two requirements to show a hate crime:

- An underlying crime (murder, assault, threats of violence, arson, or vandalism); **and**
- The crime is committed because of race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.

So, there would be a hate crime if an individual beats up a person because he or she is African American, or if a home is vandalized because the owner is Jewish. There also could be a hate crime if an individual threatens another person [because of his/her personal characteristic outlined above].

### Responding to Hate Crimes

If you believe that you are a victim of a hate crime or believe that you have witnessed such a crime, you should immediately report it to law enforcement. Although potentially stressful, in speaking to the police about a hate crime, the victim or witness should recount exactly what was said or done during the crime:

- What were the exact words said by the perpetrator(s)?
- With racist, ethnic or other bias-motivated slurs, in particular, how many times were they said?
- How was the perpetrator(s) saying the slurs - for instance was he or she yelling them?

### What is a Hate Incident?

A hate incident often involves a person making non-threatening bigoted, biased, or prejudiced comments to another individual based on race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age or

other personal characteristics. It also can involve a person displaying a non-threatening, bigoted, biased, or prejudiced message or image in certain contexts. For instance:

- A person walking down a public side walk passes by a person of the Sikh faith and makes an offensive comment to the individual based on religion;
- In a neighborhood, one resident yells an offensive comment about Lesbians to his neighbor across the street;
- A person displays a flag with a Nazi swastika on his property;

Although deeply hurtful and offensive, hate incidents do not violate criminal or civil law. They are not hate crimes or acts of unlawful discrimination. Rather, such incidents are protected free speech under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. However, if over an extended period of time a person directs numerous bigoted, biased or prejudiced statements to the same person, such a pattern of conduct could rise to the level of unlawful criminal harassment or stalking under certain state laws.

### Responding to Hate Incidents

During an in-person hate incident, a victim should not speak to or otherwise engage with the perpetrator. If possible, get away from the situation by moving to a location where other people are around and visible.

If you believe that you are a victim of an in-person hate incident or otherwise believe that bias-motivated or hateful conduct is endangering your safety,

immediately report the incident or conduct to law enforcement. You have the right to make a report about a hate incident or bias-motivated conduct to law enforcement.

Because hate incidents are not criminal in nature, the police cannot investigate the incident or conduct as a crime. Such reports, however, have value to law enforcement.

Online hate incidents, known as “cyberhate,” are a common and growing

problem. Non-threatening bigoted, biased, or prejudiced messages or images that appear on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others are not unlawful. However, many of these platforms have policies prohibiting hateful speech and images. . [See the article below on how to report on-line hate speech

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# How to Combat On-line Hate

Source: <https://civilrights.org/edfund/resource/combat-online-hate-speech/#>

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *This article outlines steps you can take to stop hate speech on the web.*

- 1. What hate speech have you encountered on the web? Why do you consider these to be examples of hate speech?**
- 2. For a one-week period, monitor your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or Instagram account for examples of hate speech. Again, why do you define these as hate speech?**
- 3. How do you feel about reporting hate speech to these platforms? When you did so, what responses did you get?**
- 4. Describe a situation where you supported a victim of hate speech.**

On public forums like Twitter, there's been an uptick of harassment and ... from racist, sexist, homophobic, and anti-Muslim individuals. And some of their victims have felt they have no choice but to quit the platforms and silence themselves. We cannot let the spread of hate speech to continue. We cannot let people celebrate racism, misogyny, homophobia, Islamophobia, and white nationalism under the banner of free speech.

Here's how you can help combat hate speech online and stop the spread of violent actions:

- Hold platforms accountable for hate speech. Report and other speech that spreads hate to the platforms that are hosting it and demand action. If given the opportunity, be specific about what you find offensive and why.
  - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/policies/community-guidelines/>
  - Twitter <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/report-abusive-behavior>
  - Instagram: <https://help.instagram.com/192435014247952>
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/help/212722115425932>
- Raise awareness of the problem. Talk to your friends and family about why hate speech is not a problem just for the internet, but our societies and culture at large
- Support people who are targets of hate speech. Fight back against harmful messages in public places by publicly standing with victims and showing solidarity
- Notify organizations fighting hate about the worst instances you see. Tracking hate, where it's coming from, and who it's directed at is an important part of fighting it.

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# How to Identify and Overcome Your Implicit Bias

Source: Maryville University: <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/addressing-implicit-bias/>

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *We all have implicit biases which are our built-in negative assumptions about people who are different.*

- 1. Use the American Academy of Family Physicians eight IMPLICIT tactics in this article to list your implicit biases. Why do you hold on to these biases? Describe one incident in which you acted toward another person or groups with implicit bias.**
- 2. This article identifies a number of strategies for overcoming implicit biases. Which appeal to you? Which have you used? Which make you uncomfortable? Why?**
- 3. Spend time with a person or group different from you. What implicit biases were at work in your encounter? How did you use any of the strategies in this article to overcome your implicit biases? How did you feel at the end of the interaction? What are your next steps with this person or group?**



Alexander Ant (Unsplash)

## What Is Implicit Bias?

Whereas explicit biases are those that people express openly (e.g., arguing that mothers of young children shouldn't hold management positions), implicit biases often lie outside of our conscious awareness.

For example, if a manager assigns a tech-heavy task to a young employee instead of an older one based on the unspoken assumption that younger staff members are better with technology, implicit bias is at play. Unconscious bias can also occur in the classroom; for example, students may marginalize non-native English speakers when choosing work groups, with the unconscious assumption that they may not perform as well as native English-speaking peers.

The insidious nature of bias lies in its unconscious nature, as our implicit biases often contradict the values that we aspire to. And when people aren't even aware that they're doing something, it can be difficult to correct.

## Types of Implicit Bias

**Race and Ethnicity Bias.** Race and ethnicity bias occurs when people assume certain characteristics about someone based on their race or ethnicity, such as assuming that all Asian students are good at math or that all Hispanic individuals are English-language learners, and then take actions that reinforce those biases — unconsciously overlooking a Hispanic employee for a task that requires strong English communication skills, for example.

**Age Bias.** Age bias occurs when people make assumptions about others based on their age, such as when a hiring manager looking for a social media-savvy applicant rejects a resume because the graduation date tips off that the applicant is middle-aged, unconsciously assuming that the candidate wouldn't be adept at social media management.

**Gender Bias.** Gender bias occurs when people assume one gender is better suited for a particular job — such as welding or babysitting — regardless of an applicant's experience level.

**LGBTQIA+ Community Bias.** Assuming that lesbians can't relate to men, and so reflexively declining to pair them with male teammates; assigning gay men to workplace tasks involving design without thinking of the reasons

behind their choice; and unconsciously overlooking bisexuals for leadership positions based on an incorrect assumption that they "can't make up their minds" are examples of LGBTQIA+ community bias. LGBTQIA+ community bias is also prevalent in the healthcare system. For example, when a nurse practitioner asks a female-presenting woman if she has a boyfriend when discussing her sexual history, implicit bias is at play.

**Ability Bias.** Ability bias is prevalent throughout society. Examples include hiring managers who are less likely to select a candidate with a disability because they unconsciously assume they'll be more likely to take sick leave, and individuals who assume that all people who struggle with mental illness are prone to violent or dangerous behavior and so, without knowing they're doing so, restrict them from certain roles.

## Overcoming Implicit Bias

People can use several different strategies to overcome and address implicit biases, although this is an area that no one can ever fully master. Examples include striving to identify and understand your implicit biases, proactively becoming more inclusive, and spending time with people who are different from you.

### Identify and Evaluate Your Own Biases.

The first step toward overcoming your implicit biases is to identify them. Reflect on your biases and be proactive in identifying the negative stereotypes you have about others.

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) discusses eight tactics that can be used to reduce implicit biases, using the acronym IMPLICIT:

- **Introspection:** Set aside time to understand your biases by taking a personal inventory of them. This can be done by taking tests to identify the biases you may have.
- **Mindfulness:** Once you understand the biases you hold, be mindful that you're more likely to give in to them when you're under pressure or need to make quick decisions. If you're feeling stressed, pause for a minute, collect yourself, and take a few deep breaths.
- **Perspective-Taking:** If you think you may be stereotyping people or groups, imagine what it would feel like for others to stereotype you.
- **Learn to Slow Down:** Before jumping to conclusions about others, remind yourself of positive examples of people from their age group, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This can include friends; colleagues; or public figures, such as athletes, members of the clergy, or local leaders.
- **Individualization:** Remind yourself that all people have individual characteristics that are separate from others within their group. Focus on the things you have in common.
- **Check Your Messaging:** Instead of telling yourself that you don't see people based on their color, class, or sexual orientation, learn

to use statements that embrace inclusivity. For example, Apple Inc.'s inclusion statement circles around the topic of being different together: "At Apple, we're not all the same, and that's our greatest strength."

- **Institutionalize Fairness:** In the workplace, learn to embrace and support diversity. The AAFP suggests individuals use the Equity and Empowerment Lens, which is designed to help organizations improve planning and resource allocation to foster more equitable policies.
- **Take Two:** Overcoming unconscious biases takes time. Understand that this is a lifelong process and that deprogramming your biases requires constant mindfulness and work.

### Be Aware and Proactive in Being More Inclusive



Vladislav Nahorny (unsplash)

Once you've identified your personal biases, you can take proactive steps to be more inclusive. For one, check your media bias: Do you find that the blogs you follow, the shows you stream, or the social media accounts you "like" are all produced by people quite similar to you? That kind of affinity is natural, but it also reinforces unconscious biases. Seek out media sources aimed at different groups. You'll hear challenging opinions

and learn how others experience the world.

In the classroom and the workplace, practice intentional inclusion. When asked to form a study or work group, pass over your friends to choose partners from different backgrounds.

**Spend Time with People Who Are Different from You Spend Time with People Who Are Different from You**

Increasing your contact with different groups can help undermine your subconscious stereotypes.

Societal forces tend to keep us separate from people of different backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. Break out of your usual routine: Join a club sports team or library book group; volunteer with a nonprofit in a different neighborhood; take part in different cultural celebrations (e.g., National Puerto Rican Day, Juneteenth, or Nowruz, the Iranian New Year).

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# Ways to Fight Hate (Right Where You Are!)

Source: Dani Dipirro: <https://positivelypresent.com/2017/08/fight-hate.html>



**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *In this article, artist/blogger Dani Dipirro suggests steps each of us can take to stop hate.*

1. **Describe a situation in which you spoke out against hate. How did you feel doing this (nervous, angry, uncertain...)? Did you make a difference? If yes, why? If no, why?**
2. **Describe a situation where you practiced tolerance toward an individual or group with whom you are usually uncomfortable if not negative? How did you feel doing this (nervous, angry, uncertain...)? Did you make a difference? If yes, why? If no, why?**
3. **Describe a situation in which you took political action to stop hatred. ? How did you feel doing this (nervous, angry, uncertain...)? Did you make a**

- difference? If yes, why? If no, why?**
4. **Why does Dani Dipirro believe that we need self-love in order to confront hate? ? What fears motivate your discomforts toward people different from you? What aspects of your own personality would you change so that you are more open to people who are different?**

If you're reading this, you're probably the kind of person who's pro-love, anti-hate, but rejecting hate in your mind (or even online) is not the same as actually *fighting* it. This is something I've been thinking about a lot lately. When I see some of these horrible situations on the news, my first thought is, *This is terrible. This needs to stop!* And then, from the safe and privileged position in which I was lucky enough to be born, I feel the inevitable resignation and shame that comes with my next

thoughts: *But what can someone like me do? Can someone like me even make a difference?*

Here are some of the best ways I've found to fight hate, regardless of where you are or what your capabilities are:

### **SPEAK UP — LOUDLY + OFTEN.**

Even if you're just one voice in a sea of many, that voice matters. The more people who condemn acts of hatred (even if the only thing you do is retweet someone else's words or share something on Facebook), the better. You might think that you don't have a big audience or you're not in a position to comment on a specific incident or it's not really your business to get involved but hate — whether its occurring in your home town or across the world — is wrong, and if you're a human living on the same planet as all of these other humans, you have a right (and a duty) to speak out against it. (Reminder: you can speak out against hate without being hateful, which is something a lot of people don't seem to be very good at!) Speak out on social media. Talk to people you know (especially people you disagree with!).

### **PRACTICE TOLERANCE DAILY.**

Tolerance isn't just about accepting people of a different race or religious background. Tolerance can begin in small doses, in tiny little shifts in your mind. Look around you at all of the various people in your life and do what you can to be more tolerant of them. No, this won't lead to major sociological changes, but if everyone made an effort to be more tolerant of other people, of the differences and all the little things that can drive you crazy, that tolerance will spread to bigger things. Remember:

you weren't born disliking certain traits or habits, but you've grown to dislike them, and you most likely reinforce those beliefs by thinking, *Ugh, I hate it when [insert name] does [insert annoying activity]*. This isn't to say you have to love everything everyone does, but practice being tolerant of it. (Side note: practicing tolerance does *not* mean tolerating hateful speech or actions.)

**STOP HATING YOURSELF.** Honestly, it might seem overly simplistic, but I believe if everyone in the world loved him or herself, the world would be a *much* more peaceful place. I keep reading about the notion that “peace starts with you,” and, while that's great in theory, it's really difficult to create outer peace via inner peace if you don't love who you are. All hate comes from fear, and most of what we fear has to do with some story we've told ourselves about certain people or situations. It's human nature to be fearful and to avoid things that make us afraid, but one of the great things about being a human is self-awareness. We can become aware of what we're doing and change it. Cultivate self-love is no easy task, but it's essential for finding both inner and outer peace. Dig deep into the things you dislike about yourself, the things you're afraid of, and challenge them. Fear, as you might have heard before, is a liar. Don't let it guide how you see yourself — or the world around you.

**GET POLITICAL.** Political engagement, regardless of where you stand on various issues or people in power, is important. It's one of the greatest ways to affect change. You might be one person, but you can make a difference with your political actions. Reach out to

your representatives, to those on the local and state and federal levels, who have access to making major changes. Tell them what matters to you. Tell them how you feel about hate and ask that they stand for the things that will bring more unity, connectedness, and love into our communities. And, of course, when it's time: vote, vote, vote for those people who shut down hate at every chance they get.

Of course, this is just a small list of things you can do to make a difference.

If you have children, you can teach them to value equality and inclusiveness. If you work in an organization with political influence, you can speak to those at the top and urge them to reject hateful acts or policies. If you have the time and ability, you can volunteer or even take a job at an anti-hate organization. If you're loaded with extra cash, you can show your support financially. If you're a march-goer, you can attend rallies and marches in your town.

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# How to Love a Hateful Person

Source: The Hope Line (<https://www.thehopeline.com/how-to-respond-to-hate-with-love/>)  
Article by Dr. Brook Gibbs, Social Psychologist



Gaspar Zaldo (unsplash)

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *This very challenging article suggests that love can disarm a person who is behaving in a hateful manner. Read the final reflection above (page 10) in which Dr. Martin Luther King speaks about “loving the hater.” Then read this article.*

- 1. Do you “bristle” at the idea of loving a hater? Why?**
- 2. How can love disarm hateful behavior? Describe a situation where you used any of the “loving” strategies in this article with a hater. Did they work? Why? What did you do if they failed?**
- 3. Research a situation where Dr. King or Mahatma Gandhi used love against haters? What were the outcomes?**

## 1. Understand Why Love is Important

Since hate is such a destructive, toxic force in society and relationships, responding to hate with love is a powerful way to break the cycle of harm and abuse that hatred can often bring with it.

Loving actions often have a way of disarming people. Being treated lovingly by someone from whom they expected hate may surprise them. Maybe your actions will interrupt their plans for more harmful words or behavior. Maybe it will diffuse some of their aggression. Maybe it will help them think about the consequences of continuing to harm someone who has been kind to them for their own emotions, their conscience, or their reputation.

Being loving instead of retaliating also frees you from starting or continuing a cycle of harm. When deciding to love, you are releasing yourself from the rage



and bitterness that fuels retaliation and leaving room for healing and growth.

## **2. Follow the Example of Radically Loving People**

Many leaders throughout history have adopted this philosophy and had a great impact on the people around them. If you need inspiration or courage when learning how to respond to hate with love, learn about loving people and follow their example.

- “Whenever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love.” - Mahatma Gandhi
- “Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”- Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount

Aside from historical figures and religious leaders, you can probably find examples to follow in your own life. If someone you admire is a very loving and forgiving person, ask them for help as you try responding to hate with love.

## **3. Remember: Love Isn’t a Feeling**

Many people may bristle at the idea of responding to hate with love because they think to love someone is to have warm, fuzzy feelings about them, or to approve of everything they do. But love isn’t a feeling. Love is a decision you make and an action you take. There are lots of loving things you can do for people who hate you that won’t put you in a position where you have to be okay

with what they did or get close to them if you’re not ready or don’t feel safe.

Loving someone who hates you could mean doing things like:

- Telling them the truth about how their actions affect others.
- Interrupting or stopping harmful words and behavior when they are happening to someone around you.
- Holding someone accountable for their decision to say and do harmful things. [You can do this with the help of a school administrator, a work supervisor, a guidance counselor, or a peer mediator.]

## **4. Practice the Golden Rule**

You’ve probably heard the Golden Rule before: Treat others the way you would have them treat you.

If you had the choice, you wouldn’t want the person or people doing hurtful things continuing to harm people with their words and actions. While you can’t control their behavior, you do have control over what you do.

Choosing to be loving instead of hateful models how you want to be treated for people around you. It shows others that hate, rage, and bullying aren’t the only options when they’ve been harmed or mistreated. You can have a clear conscience because you aren’t adding to the immense amount of unkindness in the world. You are choosing to make a different kind of impact by changing the world around you for the better.

## 5. Give Yourself Time

It's important to give yourself time as you try responding to hate with love. Doing so is a lifelong process, and it doesn't happen in a straight line. Some days, you're not going to act in the most loving and forgiving ways toward people who hurt you. That's okay. No one is perfect.

You don't have to beat yourself up if you don't love people exactly how you'd hoped to, and it doesn't mean nothing you've done matters. Just decide you will act in love next time. Instead of thinking "I have to be loving toward everyone who has ever hated me or anyone else", which will get overwhelming quickly, try breaking it down into choosing acts of love and forgiveness, one day at a time.



## 6. Get Support from People Who Understand

One of the things to remember if you're making the decision to respond to hate with love is that it's not a popular choice. ... You'll need to get support from like-minded people who understand why you want to respond to hate with love, and who respect and support your efforts to do so.

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# A Guide to Non-judgmental Dialogue



Source: <https://simplish.co/blog/non-judgmental>

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:** *Our society is so polarized today that many of us find it difficult being with or talking to people who might disagree with us. These behaviors contribute to the climate of hate. This article explores ways that we can be non-judgmental in how we interact with others, especially people with whom we disagree.*

- 1. Describe a disagreement with someone in which you engaged in judgmental conversation. Why did you feel the need to judge the other person? How did you do so? How did the conversation end up?**
- 2. Regarding the disagreement you described in #1, how would any of non-judgmental strategies in this article have created a better outcome?**

- 3. Which of these non-judgmental strategies do you generally use in difficult conversations? Why? How effective are they?**
- 4. Which of these strategies would you find the most difficult to employ? Why?**

## Non-judgmental Behavior

**1. Adopt A Non-judgmental Perspective.** Many of us see things in black and white when in reality most things exist in different shades of grey. When we listen to someone else talk or watch something they are doing, it is easy to filter their opinions or actions through our own biases, oftentimes labeling those opinions or actions as good or bad.

This way of thinking can lead us to focus on what's not really that important.

Rather than simply deciding why something is good or why something is bad, instead, we should focus on how and why things are the way they are.

In doing so, we begin to shift our perspective from judging to understanding.

Here are a few ways you can help you adopt a non-judgmental perspective:

- Be **aware** of judgments that may appear [your implicit biases discussed above on pages 33-36]. Constantly watch your thoughts and be witness to any judgmental thoughts that may arise.
- Now, **recognize** these thoughts. Do not cling to them or entertain them, simply recognize that they are there.
- And lastly, allow these thoughts to **dissipate**. Once you have brought awareness and recognition around any judgmental thoughts, it is time to allow them to dissipate and not dictate how you perceive others.

## 2. Use Non-judgmental

**Communication.** Pointing fingers at someone's actions or opinions aren't that helpful to either party. For one, you are making a judgment that they are doing something wrong, a subjective action that may not necessarily be true. And secondly, if they are doing something that isn't healthy for themselves or others around them, your judgments are likely not going to encourage them to change or improve themselves.

In fact, it's likely to have the opposite effect. Instead, try taking a non-judgmental approach and communicate in a way that isn't critical or negative. This involves keeping an open mind and rather than being judgmental adopting a curious mindset is a better form of approach.

Here are a few tips to help you adopt a non-judgmental communicative approach:

- **Listen to someone's points of view in their entirety before coming to a conclusion or opinion on what they had to say.**
- **Adopt** non-judgmental phrases and terms like "interesting" or "please, tell me more" instead of words like "good", "bad", "right", or "wrong".
- **Avoid** generalizations. Remind yourself that everybody is different, and every circumstance varies from one to another.
- Instead of offering your opinion on a problem they may be having, how about **asking** what they think of their own actions or opinions. You might be surprised at how often they've come to a similar conclusion as you may have done.

## 3. Embrace Non-judgmental

**Listening.** The last aspect of taking a non-judgmental approach is to use non-judgmental listening. Non-judgmental listening involves really trying to understand where someone else is coming from. It goes beyond just listening to what someone is saying and involves actually putting yourself in their shoes, an approach to help you fully

understand where somebody is coming from.

When someone is talking to you, try putting aside your own views and biases. Your own views will simply distract you and impair how well you are likely to understand where someone is coming from. Your aim here is to not criticize or judge the person you are listening to; it is instead to simply listen and understand where they are coming from.

To help you out, here are a few pointers on non-judgmental listening:

- **Accept that whomever you are listening to may have a different opinion to you. But, instead of rushing to disagree with them and offer a difference of opinion, try instead to respect and accept their point of view.**
- Be **genuine** in your approach. Your body language and tone of voice can often come across as condescending or judgmental without you even realizing it.
- Be as **empathetic** as possible. Endeavor to really listen to what someone is saying to you. If it helps, imagine you are in the other person's position and are trying to explain to you how exactly the things you are feeling.



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## Resources to Help Children Cope with Hate



**These two websites are very action oriented. Providing you with specific responses to offer children who have witnessed or experienced hate.**

**Discussing Hate and Violence with Children: National PTA and ADL**

[https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/discussing\\_hate\\_english.pdf](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/discussing_hate_english.pdf)

**An Age-by-Age Guide to Help Children Cope with Hate:**

<https://www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/advice/how-to-teach-your-kids-to-fight-hate-an-age-by-age-guide/>

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## Abraham's Table of Long Island

*"Come together and listen." Genesis 49:*



## If You See Something, Say Something ... Confronting Hate on Long Island Today

### A Reflection By Abraham's Table of Long Island

#### *Silence in the Face of Evil is Itself Evil*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran Pastor, was one of the few Germans who denounced Nazi hatred of the Jews – early, loudly and often. He was executed in April 1945, just weeks before Germany surrendered to the Allies. Pastor Bonhoeffer said this of Nazi hatred:

“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

Eight decades later, on the eve of the 2021 Holocaust Remembrance Day, *Time* magazine observed: “Hateful rhetoric built a case for Hitler’s Nazi regime to separate, isolate, dehumanize and ultimately exterminate an entire group solely for who they were. .... Recollections from survivors ... remind the world that *the Holocaust didn’t start with killing; it started with words*”<sup>1</sup>

Earlier, in November 2018, marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass), the violent pogrom that some believe launched the Holocaust, *Time*

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomfield, Sara J. and Greg Schneider, “The Holocaust Did Not Begin Not With Concentration Camps, But With Hateful Rhetoric. That Part of the Story Cannot Be Forgotten,” *Time*, April 9, 2021.

concluded, “People did not need to be anti-Semitic; they did not need to be infused with hatred. They just needed to remain passive for the terror unleashed by the Nazis to take its deadly toll.”<sup>2</sup>

This is why, to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022, Abraham’s Table of Long Island is reflecting on how seemingly “ordinary” hate incidents such as racist jokes can seed extraordinary crimes of violence, and even genocide.

And in so doing, we are calling upon all people of good will to speak up, to speak out and to take action in response to any form of hatred – word or deed– in their homes, schools, places of work, congregations and neighborhoods.

### ***Hate is on the Rise on Long Island***



[Long Island Wins](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Fulbrook, “Jewish Germans Had Their Lives Destroyed by Nazis During Kristallnacht. Their Neighbors Let It Happen.” Time, November 9, 2018



Historians and sociologists tell us that certain social conditions give rise to hate, the need to scapegoat or blame the “other” – people who look or speak or worship or think or act different – for our social and personal troubles.<sup>3</sup> Some of these conditions are:

- Economic downturns, such as the Great Recession of 2008 or the COVID economic collapse.
- Population changes, such as the current influx of new immigrants from Latin America.
- Cultural changes that cause uncertainty, such as the rapid expansion of social media.
- Perceived threats to traditional beliefs and values, such as how to define marriage or even gender.
- A sense that certain groups have lost status or economic security such as white working-class males. ,
- A sense of personal threat and insecurity, such as a rise in crime or a pandemic.
- Political and cultural leaders who feed hatred.



The early 1920s were such a time of rising hate when millions of Eastern and Southern European Catholics and Jews were immigrating to the U.S. and Southern Blacks were moving North, all during the deep post-World War I recession while the U.S. was still recovering from the Spanish Flu pandemic. Because of these and other changes that some thought frightening, the 1920s saw the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan, including here on Long Island.

We again live in such a time.

- July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, a fire bomb was thrown at a sacred symbol in front of a Lake Ronkonkoma mosque
- Late July 2022, antisemitic flyers were distributed on the dt-riveways of homes in Rockville Centre New York
- February 2022, a Bayport man was charged with sending dozens of hate-filled letters to LGBTQ organizations and Long Island business leaders over an eight-year period.
- January 2022, a Long Island couple faced hate-crime charges after they verbally harassed a Black family on a Long Island Rail Road train. In August 2021 a man shoveled garbage on the grounds of the Masjid Faizan-e-Aisha mosque in Hicksville.

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<sup>3</sup> See Gordon Allport’s “The Nature of Prejudice” for a classic analysis of the societal causes of prejudice.

- June 2021, New York State Senator Anna Kaplan, who fled anti-Semitic violence in her home country of Iran, received a “vile piece of hate mail using well-known white supremacist, anti-Semitic hate speech.”

The U.S. Department of Justice reported that, in New York State, the number of hate crimes based on race, ethnicity or ancestry, rose from 153 in 2018 to 200 in 2020 – a 31 percent increase.<sup>4</sup> The Suffolk County Police Department reported that in 2021 there were 24 hate “crimes” such as aggravated assault and 62 less serious but still disturbing hate “incidents” such as aggravated harassment or hate graffiti.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Our Abrahamic Faiths Call Us to Love, Not Hate***

Since 2015, Abraham’s Table of Long Island has brought together Jews, Christians and Muslims in dialogue seeking understanding, solidarity and common purpose. In that spirit, we condemn the current rise in hatred because our religious values command us do so.

- ❖ The Hebrew Book of Proverbs clearly tells us: “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.” (Proverbs 10:12).
- ❖ The Christian letter of St. John clearly tells us: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar.” (1 John 4:20)
- ❖ The Muslim scholar Anas ibn Malik clearly tells us: “Do not hate each other, do not envy each other, do not turn away from each other...”



All the world’s great religions call their followers to love. For the Abrahamic faiths – Jews, Christians and Muslims, descendants of the Prophet Abraham – this call is rooted in the belief that every person is created in the image of our one God, and therefore each must be treated with dignity. This is the

heart of our Abrahamic mission to love rather than hate; this is why we pray:

- ❖ For the millions of Holocaust victims;
- ❖ For today’s victims of hatred on Long Island and elsewhere in the United States;
- ❖ For conversion of the hearts of those who hate “the other.”

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “Fast Facts on Hate Crimes in New York State”, 2020

<sup>5</sup> Suffolk County Police Department, “Data Transparency Hub - Hate Crimes,” 2022

## ***Our Abrahamic Faiths Call Us To Act Against Hate***

On January 15, 2022, a gunman took hostages at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville Texas. Their Rabbi, Charlie Cytron-Walker, drew from his Abrahamic values to propose that our welcoming “strangers” is a powerful but difficult antidote to hate: “Welcoming strangers does not come naturally. Strangers are ... unknown [and] the unknown often generate fear. ... Jews are strangers. Muslims are strangers...People with different religious traditions ... ethnicities ... who hold different political views are seen as strangers. ... It is a lot easier to stick with one’s group. ‘Love your neighbor’ is hard enough. And this is why I ...have pointed out again and again the sacred obligation to love the stranger ... caring enough that we’re willing to meet and talk with those who are different. ...”<sup>6</sup>



Rabbi Cytron-Walker suggested one way that our common faith traditions compel us, individually and collectively, to confront the rise of hate. With the Rabbi’s sense of “sacred obligation,” we call upon every Long Islander of good will to:

- ❖ Reach out to and connect with a “stranger, the “other,” anyone who seems different from us;
- ❖ Participate in the Holocaust Remembrance Day interfaith service at the Suffolk Y Jewish Community Center, Thursday, April 28, 2022. 1:00PM. 74 Hauppauge Road, Commack.
- ❖ Teach and live inclusion, equality and diversity in our families, our schools, our congregations, our places of work, our communities;
- ❖ Speak up whenever we hear hateful speech in our home or community;
- ❖ Report acts of hate to local authorities such as school officials or a town anti-bias task force or the police;
- ❖ Support local and national organizations that work against hatred;
- ❖ Demand responses from government officials that stop acts of hate;
- ❖ Participating in public vigils and rallies protesting hate;
- ❖ Write letters to the editor that condemn acts of hate on Long Island.

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<sup>6</sup> Charlie Cytron Walker, “I will Never Stop Welcoming the Stranger.” New York Times, February 24, 2022

*Hate has no home here. As the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us, “darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”*

*At this time of rising hatred, let us be Long Islanders of light and love, in sentiment, in thought, and in action.*

### **Abraham’s Table of Long Island Steering Committee**

**Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal RC Church,  
Wyandanch**

**Mehmet Tetik, Vice Chair, Turkish Cultural Center of Long Island**

**Bat Sheva Slavin, Vice Chair, Suffolk Y Jewish Community Center, Commack**

**Sadri Altinok, Turkish Cultural Center of Long Island**

**Rev. William Brisotti, Pastor Emeritus, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal RC  
Church, Wyandanch**

**Dr. Isma Chaudhry, Islamic Center of Long Island**

**Vicar Jean Dougherty, St Andrew’s Lutheran Church, Smithtown**

**Alice Fossner, Dix Hills Jewish Center**

**Mary Friedman, St. Thomas More RC Church, Hauppauge**

**David Knishkowsky, Abraham’s Table of Long Island**

**Kaitlyn Pawlukojs, Friends Society of Westbury**

**David Pinkowitz, Temple Beth Torah, Melville and Jewish Community Relations  
Council of Long Island**

**Alexis Stafford, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal RC Church, Wyandanch**

**Sr. Susan Wilcox, CSJ, Sisters of St. Joseph, Brentwood**

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