

Who gave anti-Semitism permission to crawl out from under its rock?

By **Jacqueline Breines**

Our hearts are broken. We're desolate. We're angry. We're even a little bit surprised.



Who gave American anti-Semitism permission to crawl out from under its rock?

Oh. Right.

With regard to terrorism hitting home, American Jews' innocence has been crushed, in the same way that all Americans' innocence was shattered on 9/11.

The Pittsburgh shooting has harshly reminded us that white nationalism threatens us all. The past two years have imparted a false sense of relief for Jews at not being the top target for hate this time around, with refugees and/or Muslims claiming that dubious honor. Many Jews have stepped up to defend those attacked, in part because it's the right thing to do, and also because we know that our turn will inevitably come.

And our turn came. We didn't need to wait very long. After all,

we live in a time when Jew-hating can be put on public display, just as it was in Charlottesville, and our president musters up a big shrug in response.

We find ourselves torn between heartbreak and anger, though they can feel like the same emotion traveling in opposite directions, with heartbreak focused inward and anger focused outward. When we focus on our heartbreak, we are often reduced to tears. This is fine as an immediate release of emotion but unsustainable as a long-term response.

Anger, on the other hand, is an excellent long-term response, as it can drive action. So as the shock wears off and your heartbreak dulls, I ask you to hold onto your anger. I ask you to let it rise. I ask you to stand up to the hatred behind the heinous acts that took place in Pittsburgh.

Is this a call to violence? No. Gandhi admonished us that "an eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind," and he was right. 'Eye for an eye' creates a connection to those against whom we desire revenge, rather than a connection to their victims.

No, the way we should stand up is to be openly proud and tolerant Jews. This, in and of itself, will cause pain to white nationalists.

It's important to remember that although we live in a time of hate speech and violent acts, we are mostly surrounded by people who are as appalled as we are.

Pittsburgh's victims were killed because they were Jewish, and also because they were hated for their support of today's refugees. If you're Jewish, rise up by living your Judaism openly and boldly. If you're Jewish or not, rise up by fighting on behalf of today's refugees.

It matters when we stand up for others; it matters when others stand up for us.

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Pittsburgh's Jewish leaders have been inundated with offers of help from Jews and non-Jews alike, to the point where they can barely field the onslaught of overtures. It is striking that out of an evil act can come such a barrage of blessings.

When we feel overcome by despair, it's important to remember that love trumps hate, and light trumps darkness. It's trite but true. When good people shine their light, when good people stand up strong and tall against evil, then hate and darkness recede. Let your Jewish light shine. Let your Muslim light shine. Let your refugee light shine. Let your

transgender light shine. We are stronger together when we loudly and proudly exude those traits that also make us a potential target.

In Judaism, it is said that the whole world is a narrow bridge, and the important thing is to not be afraid. We must have courage, even when the narrow bridge is suspended over a river of hatred. We must confront those who promote intolerance and spread fear of the other, even as we comfort the most recent victims of hate. This is the healthy response to such a tragedy.

Stand together with all victims of hate, regardless of which group is the target-of-the-week. Call out hate at every opportunity; make it feel unwelcome. I harbor no illusions that we can drive hate completely out of our America, but let us at least drive it back under its rock where it feels less emboldened.

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