



The Tusker Tribune

SOMERS MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER

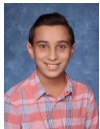


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Antisemitism Impacts All of Us



By Noah Volkman
Tusker Tribune Staff

Anti-Semitism is a growing problem in our world, our country, our state, and even our local community.

Many people don't even know what anti-Semitism is, so I'm here to explain it; what it is, why it's happening, who is affected by it, when it started and why you should care about.

Anti-Semitism is a form of prejudice or discrimination that includes hatred, injustice or other unfair treatment towards Jews. More simply, it is when people stereotype Jews, say that Jews are inferior to other religions, or ridicule or single out someone, all because they're Jewish. Many of the anti-Semitic thoughts and acts are based on age-old stereotypes and myths.

Since ancient times, even the beginning of Judaism, hostility towards Jews has been around. Jews were, and still are at times, criticized. They were sometimes even punished or abused for wanting to stay as their own religious group that didn't agree with the non-Jewish values and lifestyle. And as Christianity grew, so did hatred of Jews. In the middle ages (11th-14th centuries), Jews were thought of as "Christ-killers" and "devils." Jews have been forced to live in only-Jew ghettos long before the Holocaust. Many Jews were forced to convert as a means of survival, avoiding torture, expulsion, even death. Many of these converts still practiced Judaism in secret.

The surge of acts of anti-Semitism in America is scary. There are lots of reports of bomb threats, shootings, vandalism and graffiti of swastikas, many targeting Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) and synagogues around the country.

There have also been a grotesque amount of bomb threats to Jewish Community Centers (JCC) in America. JCCs are recreational and social organizations serving the Jewish community and they are open to everyone in the community. I

went to a JCC for preschool. There have been upwards of 70 threats across over 50 JCCs nationally. There are also threats over the telephone.

The following quote talks about incidents at the Cheshed Shel Emeth Society cemetery in University City (a suburb of St. Louis, MO), a historic century-old Jewish cemetery. During the week of February 20, 2017, more than 170 headstones were toppled and damaged at Cheshed Shel Emeth. Within the next week, more than 100 headstones were given the same treatment at Mt.

Carmel Cemetery in Philadelphia, PA. The FBI eventually joined the investigation on possible hate crimes.

"In the middle of the night, at some point, somebody got into Cheshed Shel Emeth and knocked, from what I can tell, more than a hundred headstones, but it's hard to tell. What I understand from management is that the oldest part of the cemetery was here and that the stones may have had less stability than the newer ones that were placed recently. A lot of them seem to have dates from the 1930s. It's just sad. I mean, a cemetery is

not a place to necessarily feel emotions that are optimistic or up; you see somebody's soul being damaged that way with such carelessness is extraordinary."

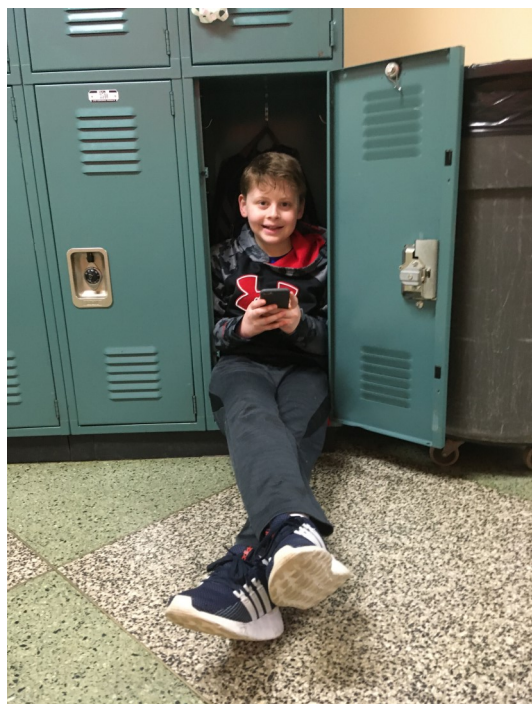
– Karen Aroesty, Anti-Defamation League Regional Director for Missouri and Southern Illinois

On October 27, 2018, a gunman, identified as Robert Bowers, armed with an assault rifle and several handguns, entered the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA and opened fire. Described as the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the U.S., at least 11 congregants were killed, and four police officers and two others were wounded. This is what the synagogue's rabbi had to say following the attack:

"I'm regrettably active and engaged with all of these families because I have seven congregants I have to bury. Hate does not know religion, race, creed, political party. It's not a political issue in any way, shape or form. Hate does not know any of those things. It exists in all people.

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Tristan Kavanagh finds his locker is the perfect place for hangin' out while waiting for the first bell.

The Significance of the Martin Luther King Holiday



**By Nick Bachas
Tusker Tribune Staff**

The third Monday of January is known as Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a scholar and minister who led the civil rights movement. After his assassination, they memorialized him by making the 20th of January an American federal holiday.

Martin Luther King Jr. had a big impact on race relations in the U.S in the mid 1950s. He was instrumental in fighting for equal rights for people of color.

King was a very important person in our history.



Without him, a lot of things would be different. Martin Luther King Jr. also won a Nobel peace prize for his efforts to fight racial inequality in a non-violent matter. He was also one of the organizers of the March on Washington in 1963 where he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Tragically, he was fatally shot at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968, at 6:01 p.m. CST. He was rushed to St. Joseph's Hospital, where he died at 7:05 p.m. His funeral was at 10:30 a.m. at Ebenezer Baptist Church and 1300 people showed up to his funeral. Today he is buried at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Park, Atlanta, GA.

Chiefs' Super Bowl Victory Hard-Earned



**By Josh Feldman
Tusker Tribune Staff**

On February 2, 2020 super bowl 54 took place.

That game was between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers.

In the end, the Chiefs came out on top and won 31 to 20. In every single playoff game for the Chiefs in the postseason, they came back to win, after being down by more than 10 points each game.

The Chiefs' quarterback, Patrick Mahomes, was awarded with Super Bowl MVP. Mahomes threw for 286 yards, throwing 2 touchdown



passes, 2 interceptions, and completing 26 of 42 passes.

His opponent, Jimmy Garoppolo threw for 219 yards, throwing 2 touchdowns, 1 interception, and completing 20 of 31 passes.

In the rushing game, Chiefs running back Damien Williams ran for 104 yards in 17 attempts, scoring 1 touchdown. Patrick Mahomes rushed for 29 yards in 9 carries, also scoring 1 touchdown. 49ers running back, Raheem Mostert rushed for 58 yards

scoring 1 touchdown.

Safe to say it was a very interesting super bowl.

The Tusker Tribune is the online Somers Middle School Student Newspaper. It is published weekly (except during school vacations) on the Somers Middle School Website. It is entirely student-written by 6th, 7th and 8th grade students from:

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Antisemitism

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When I came it was, what I would assume to be a typical Shabbat morning. Shabbat is the Hebrew word for our sabbath. I got ready for services, greeted people and so forth. We began our services. Everything seemed as it normally would. Nothing out of the ordinary in any way, shape or form."

- Rabbi Jeffrey Myers

In a 2017 study, anti-Semitic incidents increased by nearly 60% since 2016. This is the largest increase in one year on record (as of 2017). Much of this increase is due to school and college incidents. Since the Holocaust in the mid-late 1940s, the swastika has been the biggest symbol of anti-Jew and white supremacy for much of the world. Being that social media is essentially the largest way people communicate these days, there has also been a tsunami of anti-Semitism on social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

I have faced lots of anti-Semitism over the years. Some examples of this include swastikas in my synagogue and school, jokes about the Holocaust, German Nazis, jokes about Jews being rich, poor or greedy and Jews in general, Nazi salutes, using 'Jew' as a slur; the list goes on.

I recently interviewed Somers Middle School principal Mr. Jeffrey Getman and he was kind enough to answer some of my questions about anti-Semitism.

Question 1: What is your view on anti-Semitism on a general scale?

Answer: I think it's on the rise, I think people feel empowered for whatever reason to give their views even if they're full of hate speech and I don't why. Something I wonder about is whether there's been a lot of anti-Semitic acts happening and the news is reporting more on it or just more things are happening, and the news is reporting just as much. It's happening more whether it's physical, graffiti, etc. It's happening more than ever.

Question 2: Being that the Jewish community is a minority in Somers and at SMS, why do you think that Jewish students at SMS face anti-Semitism?

Answer: I think it's a couple of things: one, I don't know that 10-13-year-olds understand the gravity of some of their words and actions and how offensive a swastika is or some of the names. Two, I think sometimes people do things without thinking first. Three, I wonder if there are core values that kids have that are anti-Semitic in nature. Something I think we need to account for when

thinking about this is their purpose. When somebody says something offensive whether it's racist or anti-Semitic, what's their purpose? Is it to be hurtful? Is it to entertain the lunch table or the crowd behind them? Or is it because they truly believe what they're saying? Teenagers make mistakes, but what was the belief behind whatever happened? It's not an excuse though.

Question 3: Why do people hate Jews? What's the origin? When a kid says something anti-Semitic today, are they saying it because they think it's funny, or do they actually hate Jews?

Answer: That's part of the work that the adults have to do. I don't know there's one answer to that, but that it's a case-by-case situation. We have to dig into the feeling behind it. No time is it okay, but it makes how you address it different.

I don't know the origin to be honest with you. It's something I've struggled with; where it's from, where it's thought to be okay. It just seems that ignorance might

be the answer.

Question 4: Why do you think some kids and people, in general, think it's okay for them to make anti-Semitic and hateful comments to others, regardless of religious identification?

Answer: There's nothing more hurtful than racism or anti-Semitism or other types of religious or racial hate. It seems to be a teenage thing though. I don't think some teenagers understand how hurtful some of the language is. With adults, I think we all have different backgrounds and upbringings and situations. I think there are several different reasons adults continue to spew hate. But unfortunately, that hate gets passed down to kids. I think the only thing we can do is treat everyone with respect. I also think it's continual education; when something happens in school, it might really hit home with them about how bad and hurtful it is. And I think that's the only way to change people's behaviors; to see what impact it has on others.

Question 5: If a student is subject to an anti-Semitic trope from another student, what response should they have?

Answer: I think it depends on the student and their confidence and/or comfort level. If somebody says something like that, I think it's appropriate to say "that's not okay. Not only is that offensive to me it's offensive to others." But that takes a lot of confidence. Sometimes it has an impact on others, sometimes it doesn't. They should report it to an adult. Then that becomes a he-said-she-said thing but at the very least it can foster the power of anti-semitic or racist words.

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Antisemitism

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Question 6: What's an appropriate way to combat hate and how can we teach others not just what not to say, but what to say?

Answer: You ever hear the term "upstander" in terms of bullying? I think it's encouraging kids to do that. It's all related. When you see someone treating someone poorly, what skill set do you have to help? That takes guts as adolescents because people aren't as confident as adolescents. They don't want the spotlight on them. It's an expectation to step out of their comfort zone when they see something happening to say something. It's going to come down to an individual.

Question 7: Being that most things aren't just on the surface level, how many generations do we have to go back to find the source? Since kids are mostly learning this from home (meaning from their parents, social media, TV, etc.), why do many think it's not a problem/not important to explain why it's not OK to say those things? Ultimately, when a comment is made, the source is not the person that made the comment; they had to have heard it somewhere, so the essential question is: what can we do to find the source of these problems and then stop it from spreading any more?

Answer: I'm not sure that we'll ever be able to identify the source. It's so varied. Maybe it's home or social media or peers or movies, I don't know. I think there are so many places that could come into play. Deep down, most people are caring and empathetic. If two kids sit in a room together and one can say "that's not okay. It hurts and it's offensive," that's already progress. It's broadly educating but discussing more specifically when you can address an issue. One of the things we started to do is restorative circles. So when a person does something wrong is not just disciplining but making amends. Often that has a long-term impact.

Question 8: What's the difference between anti-Semitism and other forms of religious hate?

Answer: My first response would be: hateful speech or actions are hateful speech or actions. Hate is hate. There's such a history that Jews have gone through that you can't help but think about the troubled past of Jews. I would say the same about racism. You have to think about the history.

Question 9: Saying "stop" usually doesn't work and some people don't realize that

what they said isn't funny but is horrible. Why?

Answer: I think teens are pretty self-absorbed, to be honest. If a teen says something, they don't even realize half the time the impact it'll have on the person they're saying it to. Even though they know it's wrong or it's not part of their core values, they haven't thought of it. But if you're subject to it, you're more in-tune.

(I then asked Mr. Getman if he feels comfortable with me sharing that he's Jewish. He said that actually, he himself was raised Catholic but his wife and kids are Jewish so he's learned a lot about the Jewish religion and culture and customs, etc.)

Question 10: Why would you think that I asked you if you feel comfortable sharing the fact that you're Jewish?

Answer: This isn't the case with me, but with others, some people might be uncomfortable if others knew that. They might think they would be treated differently. Some people are proud of their religion and some aren't. It depends on people's experiences.



Question 11: Have you or any of your Jewish friends or family experienced anti-Semitism before? In the moment of experiencing it, how did you/they feel? Minutes after the initial shock of the statement, and you had time to think and process it all, did you/they feel differently about the person or the comment

itself?

Answer: To my kids, yes. There were 2 feelings: embarrassment and anger. It depends on who said it. Some kids have said things that they have no relationship with but when it was kids closer to them it hurt more. We try to debrief anything. It's about talking about situations and talking about what you would do differently.

Question 13: By learning (more) about anti-Semitism, what can we learn about ourselves?

Answer: I think this goes back to that in general, we can learn to put ourselves in other people's shoes. Your experiences are different than mine, I guess it's just understanding what people go through and trying to have empathy. Trying to empathize with what people are going through and putting yourself in that situation.

For more information on the rise of anti-Semitism, visit:

www.adl.org