

## ***Anti-Semitism in America***

Antisemitism in America seems like it should be an oxymoron. The United States has been the best country ever for the Jewish people, a beacon of light and tolerance.

There have been some dark moments. The United States refused 300,000 refugees offered by the Nazis before the scourge of the Holocaust wiped out European Jewry. The United States lied when it said it could not bomb the rail links to the death camp, Auschwitz, when in fact bombers were operating out of both Italy and the UK. Private letters now show both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to be antisemites.

In 1942, Treasury Department officials wrote a paper referring to the United States' Acquiescence in the Murder of European Jewry. Treasury Secretary merely took that to President Roosevelt, who convened a show conference that did nothing.

Nevertheless, Jews in America, England, Australia, Canada, and Palestine all fought bravely for the allied cause.

Few Jewish people I know, who have grown up in America, were not affected by some incident of antisemitism in their life. Many people simply had to bear ignorant comments and others could not get into colleges or were excluded from jobs because there were "too many Jews."

Speaking or writing about antisemitism in America is terribly painful.

Since the massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023, the outpouring of an overwhelming number of members of the non-Jewish community has been phenomenal. Those kind, thoughtful, and very honorable messages of outreach are not taken for granted. Most Americans are thoroughly supportive of their Jewish friends and neighbors, the State of Israel, and abhor bigotry of any kind, against anyone. We are a great and tolerant people.

I have my Dad on video explaining how he went for a job at the New York Telephone Company after college. He was asked his religion and he proudly stated that he was Jewish. He was told, "We do not hire Jews." Even today looking at the video, my Dad's pain is palpable as he explained the difficulty in extricating oneself from a situation like that. "How do you get out of there? Do you crawl out? Do you back out slowly? Do you turn and run?"

Dad also told a story of working in the labor Camp during the Great Depression in the Midwest. He was asked by a Black man to pass the salt, which he promptly did. Someone else at the table said, "It would take a k\*k\* to help the n\*\*\*\* out."

When my parents went on their honeymoon to Lake George, New York, they saw signs on the way that said, "No Jews or dogs permitted." Others said, "No Jews or coloreds permitted."

In my long and joyful time in Williamsport I have had to bear the unpleasant and at times thoroughly ignorant comments of judges, a landlord, and even other lawyers with respect to my religion. Many of those people, in later years, asked for my forgiveness and I was very moved by that. In several of the cases, those who asked me were dying from cancer, but their feelings of regret were nonetheless sincere, in my view.

I had one judge tell me that I had to show up on a Jewish holiday. When I informed him that I could not work on that holiday, he told me that he knew a less religious Jew who would work. I asked him if he knew the difference between a Catholic and a Unitarian, since I learned that he was born Catholic. "Certainly," he said. I then responded, "Well you see Judge, I am Catholic." He promptly cancelled the day of court.

A landlord asked me to find a tenant for him when I moved from one location to another. He said to me, "You were lucky I rented to you. Don't rent to no colored people." I tried as hard as I could to find a Black person to take my place. After he passed away, his wife apologized to me for that comment. She remembered.

One time when I was cross-examining someone on the stand, he referred to "some Jew" who had questioned his work years previously. Some years later he came up to me in a bar and apologized.

There are too many incidents to mention in a short article, but they all hurt equally.

The historical basis for anti-Semitism is long and checkered. Some say that antisemitic roots can be found in Roman times. The Romans hated the Jews because of Jewish desire for their independence and because the Jews did not accept the pantheon of gods which was part of Greco Roman culture. The Jews pray to one God in heaven, who could not be seen, touched, and was not made of marble or wood. All other people conquered by the Romans accepted the Roman gods along with their own. The fact is that the Jews did not cause a great deal of suspicion and hostility on the part of the Romans.

Christianity and Islam had their own gripes against the Jewish people, who refused to accept any other prophet of God. Righteous and holy non-Jews were always recognized by the Jewish faith, but the unity or "oneness" of God was something Jews would never compromise. That created much hostility.

Thankfully in 1962 the Vatican led the way in changing antiquated church doctrine towards the Jews. Pope John XXIII's prayer Forgiveness to the Jewish People is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature written in the English language. It should be read by everyone.

By the time of the Holocaust and World War II, Jews had already been driven out of England, France, Spain, Northern Europe, and virtually everywhere except for the lands east of Germany. The murder of 6 million Jews ending in 1945 was the continuation of millennia of murder.

In recent times, Jews have faced hatred from both the left and right. Martin Luther King described himself as a Zionist. He was a friend of the Jewish people, who vociferously, with their time, energy, and money supported the civil rights movement. Growing up, I never met a Jew who did not support the desire of African Americans to live with dignity and equality in this country. Even those who would have described themselves as conservatives believed that African Americans would benefit from the American dream, if only they were afforded equal opportunity.

What has changed? On the ground, we see that fundamentalist Muslim Arab hatred for Jews and Christians in the Middle East has fueled antagonism against Jews around the world. Those who seek Jihad in America and Europe see Israel as an obstacle to their progress.

Israel has now become a stand in for an ancient hatred against Jews promoted in the modern day by fundamentalists within Islam and their hateful followers. Social media permits the dispensing of the most scurrilous, rabid, and blatantly untruthful propaganda against the hated Jew, Israel, and its supporters. A Jew does not even need to be a supporter of Israel in order to be in the crosshairs of those who peddle their dangerous trash.

The “silent majority” in America will not remain silent very long. There will be a backlash against an attack on Jewish American citizens who have fought in every war this country has engaged in, from the Revolution right up to our current involvement in Iraq.

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