



May 31, 2020 – Letter to the Editor

“Few of us seem to realize how insidious, how radical, how universal and evil racism is. Few of us realize that racism is man’s gravest threat to man, the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason, the maximum of cruelty for a minimum of thinking.”

These words were spoken by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel at the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago on January 14, 1963, at which Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was also a featured speaker.

During the Temple B’nai Abraham Congregational Meeting on May 31st community members voted to empower me as their Rabbi to make a statement on behalf of the synagogue community against this evil, this threat, this hatred.

Temple B’nai Abraham is unequivocally against racism and bigotry in all of its forms. Our congregation’s Guiding Values state all humans are created *b’tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image, and therefore we must treat each accordingly. *Tikkun olam*, world repair, is another of our values, calling on us to take stands and act for a more just and peaceful world.

The murder of George Floyd is the murder of a precious human being, an image of God. It is also yet another act of racial violence by certain police officers who are charged with protecting all of us. Police violence against people of color is part of a legacy of systemic racism, constructed over hundreds of years, with which this country must grapple.

We thank the local police chiefs who have sought out implicit-bias training for themselves and their forces, and who have made statements over the past few days. But much more needs to be done. More can always be done.

We all must get involved in efforts to dismantle institutionalized racism. Silence is complicity. We Jews know that all too well from our own history. We will not be silent.

We commit to:

1. Continue to explicitly condemn white supremacy and white nationalism.
2. Engage in communal learning and conversations about racism and white privilege.
3. Join with other Jewish and multifaith organizations to stand together against bigotry.

In these desperate times of social distancing, we see clearly how dependent we are upon one another and how we are all connected. May we channel our anger, fear, and concern into opening our hearts and minds in order to make positive change together.

L'shalom, to peace,

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