

A Deadly Shooting at Yet Another Synagogue: The Murder of Another Innocent and the Hope That It Has Spawned

The deadly shooting that took place at the Chabad of Poway Synagogue in Poway, California on the last day of Passover last Saturday, April 27, 2019, was reprehensible. Those of you who follow my writings probably guessed that I would write about it. I had to wait a few days before doing so, however. I wanted to be sure that the utter anger and the indescribable frustration that I was feeling in response did not result in my speaking either with words or in a tone that I would later regret. How I wish that I had the inner peace and equanimity of a Zen master to "take it all in stride", and seeing a bigger picture, remain internally still in the face of the evil that happens in this world.....But I am not yet there. So today, I share with you my feelings about what happened last Saturday morning. Today, I share my sorrow. I share my grief for the victims. I share my anguish for all of humanity that we have not yet evolved beyond hatred and violence. And today..... I share my hope in the face of an extraordinary action taken by another Poway synagogue in response to the tragedy.

But first.....My sincere, deep and heartfelt sympathy goes out to the husband, daughter and other family members of Ms. Lori Kaye who was killed by the shooter. I know very well, the excruciating pain of the sudden and unexpected death of a very close loved one. I know it extremely well. To Ms. Kaye's family, I will keep you in my thoughts, prayers and meditations over the next few weeks. To the three other shooting victims, Rabbi, Yisrael Goldsteinnine, eight year old Noya Dahan, (whose family, eight years ago, came to the U.S. fleeing anti-Semitic violence in Israel), and Mr. Almog Peretz, you are also in my thoughts, prayers and meditations.

I am tired of writing these kinds of essays, and you, no doubt, may be tired of reading them if all I do is share my outrage. For that reason, and indeed, given how tragically common hate-driven mass shootings are in the United States, while every single such tragedy deserves our full attention, I will write these essays not after every such incident, but only selectively. I chose to write about THIS one because of an amazingly hopeful act of love that has happened as a result of it - an action taken by another Poway synagogue.

Quoting in part from an April 30, 2019 "Voice of San Diego" news story about the tragedy:

"One day after a shooting at Chabad of Poway synagogue, a nearby Jewish temple took action to enhance its embrace of those from other faiths and cultural backgrounds.

Members of Temple Adat Shalom in Poway voted Sunday to allow non-Jews to serve on its Board of Trustees, turning out in droves to do so in the aftermath of the violence two miles away that left one dead and three injured.

'The common humanity to strive for something better no matter what your faith of origin is, I think that strengthens us all,' said Temple Adat Shalom Rabbi David Castiglione.

The temple's Board of Trustees has a wide array of responsibilities, ranging from budgeting to membership to marketing. The bylaws of the temple, founded in the 1970s, said board members must be Jewish.

Castiglione said times have changed and sectarianism was best left in the past. 'It doesn't mean abandoning faith or abandoning the principles of faith, but actually living up to the more universalistic intentions of all faiths, including our own,' he said.

The rabbi said the recent hate crimes against people of faith worldwide have left him 'really tired of the divisiveness.'

'The time has come to pick up the flame, pick up the torch and say to hell with the hate,' said Castiglione, who was wearing a blue wristband from the United States Holocaust Museum that said, 'Erase the Hate'. 'I'm not going to be reactive to it, I'm just going to lead the way to righteousness,' he continued. 'By righteousness, I mean embracing love, embracing our common humanity, making this congregation a beacon of love and acceptance and outreach into the community'."

In my March 18, 2019 post: "Anti-Semitism in New Zealand: Hatred Across the Planet", I said that the millions of us who are repulsed by white supremacy ideology and its resulting unspeakable violence, EVERY single time, in EVERY SINGLE instance, need to counter it with love.

Rabbi Castiglione's act of welcoming all to serve on the Board of his temple is such an act of love. It is an act of openness, an act of acceptance, an act of peace. My complete and absolute respect and appreciation go to the members of the Poway Temple Adat Shalom who came out "in droves" to vote to open its Board to all people of good will. In the face of hatred, they chose to pick up the key to our freedom - the embrace of our common humanity. Also, my total admiration goes to Rabbi Castiglione for his courage in facing whatever opposition to the move may have been present in his community, for it often takes great courage to engage in great acts of love.

As I stated on March 18, this kind of love act should follow EVERY SINGLE act of hate-based violence, EVERY SINGLE TIME it happens. My hope is that then, IN TIME, at least 100 such acts of love are taken in response to an act of violence that is fueled by hate. I hope that ALL religious communities respond with such an act of love EACH AND EVERY TIME such violence occurs.

This, my friends, is how we can win. It is the ONLY way we can win.....and we CAN do it. We really can do this. It is our universal, world-wide challenge of love. It is our clarion call. Rabbi Castiglione's act of opening the Board of Directors to good people of all faiths has made me hopeful that as human beings, we will indeed heed that love call.

Rabbi Castiglione shall have the last word in this essay:

"The common humanity to strive for something better no matter what your faith of origin is.....strengthens us all..... We don't allow them to beat us into submission or allow them to depress us. We rise, and we live."

For the full "Voice of San Diego" article, go to:

<https://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/news/one-day-after-shooting-poway-temple-voted-to-open-its-board-to-other-faiths/>