The Usual Rhetoric Won’t Stop Anti-Semitism

December 31, 2019

On the last night of Hanukkah (December 29), I awoke to several horrible and frightening headlines: "5 People Were Stabbed at a Hanukkah Celebration in a New York Suburb"; "100 Jewish Graves Were Desecrated in France--A Search for the Websites That Fueled the Hate Led to the US"; "Anti-Semitic Graffiti Sprayed Across London Shopfronts and Synagogue"; "NYPD Investigating 9th Anti-Semitic Attack Reported This Week"

These events are becoming prevalent and call for more than the usual hand wringing, expressions of sadness and the repetition of slogans “Never Again.” Those kinds of rhetorical responses alone are
insufficient, providing only lip service to the quest to prevent anti-Semitism. Christians, Muslims, Blacks, Jews, Hispanics, Gays/Lesbians and others should share these stories, then loudly speaking out to curtail the increasing anti-Semitism and racism threatening our world—something we know is emboldened by our President whose toxic discourse enables and gives permission for haters to come out of the shadows. Citizens of all races, religions and ethnicities must email government officials at all levels, demanding actions be taken to discover the causes of this hatred and violence, and concrete plans, including education, be implemented to address those causes.

After all, an attack on any one group is an attack on all potentially vulnerable groups. With every day, our fear should accelerate. As Frida Ghitis, a former CNN producer and Washington Post contributor aptly put it: “Anti-Semitism is a symptom of a larger societal problem. Sure, when Jews are unsafe, it is they who are most at risk, but Jews are the canary in the coalmine, an early warning sign of a community or a nation losing its moorings. The coalmine is filling with toxic fumes.”

We must all be prepared to answer when our children and future generations ask, “What did you do in 2020 to stop such atrocious and venomous acts?”

*Rick Cherwitz,*
*Austin, Texas*