The Usual Rhetoric Won’t Stop Anti-Semitism

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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 more prevalent. Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, who was in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill on Oct. 27, 2018 when a gunman opened fire killing 11 people, said the weekend attack in New York brought back terrible memories: “For me, it was a ‘oh no, not again’ sort of moment, combined with the flurry of anti-Semitic
violence that you’ve heard has been taking place in New York over the past three weeks,” Rabbi Myers told CNN in an interview Monday. “It made me sort of wonder... I don’t recall them selling licenses to have open hunting season on Jews. But it sure can make Jews feel that way.”

The prevalence of anti-Semitism calls for more than the usual hand wringing, expressions of sadness and repetition of slogans like “Never Again.” These rhetorical responses alone are insufficient, providing only lip service to the quest to prevent anti-Semitism. Citizens of all races, ethnicities and religions should share these stories, loudly speaking out to curtail the increasing anti-Semitism and racism threatening our world.

While not the cause of the problem, we know that such hatred is emboldened by our President and he must be repudiated.

Actions must also 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.

As Frida Ghitis, a former CNN producer aptly put it: “Anti-Semitism is a symptom of a larger societal problem. 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?”

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