



JEWISH MESSENGER

Adar 5782
Spring 2022

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford



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Amir Cohen, *executive director*
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There's No Such Thing as Just One Swastika

By Amir Cohen

I wrote this piece a few months ago after a swastika was painted on a tree in Fairhaven. The war in Ukraine has served us with fresh pictures and sounds that many thought we'd never see again. With that in mind here is that piece. I think it has a different feel to it now. Do you agree?

What if President Roosevelt ordered the bombing of the train tracks? Would we be talking about FIVE million murdered instead of SIX? My grandfather only lost the ability to play violin or become a surgeon. He still managed to leave Europe, become a successful psychiatrist in Jerusalem, and become one of the pioneering inventors of the polygraph. No big deal that the Nazi youth beat him up because they knew that he was Jewish by reading a newspaper article about his becoming the youngest professor on record at the local university. What about the cemetery in Fall River that was desecrated by antisemitic graffiti or the bagel store in Dartmouth? Did local police or the FBI ever find anything regarding these crimes?



to educate people about what the significance of the swastika is to Jews, and I hope this column serves as continuation of that education, because this act has certainly demonstrated the need for it. Do I think this latest hateful act is the work of a local white supremacist chapter? Probably not. I am very well aware that a swastika like the one painted in Fairhaven is likely the lashing out of someone angry or simply wishing to get a rise out of people. But, in using such a hateful and specifically targeted symbol to express some sort of grievance, they are helping to make swastikas a common way to protest. That should never be acceptable. The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford invests tremendous resources in educating the next generation about the horrors of the Holocaust. Our "Trunk of Tolerance" program is a resource for educators and our active Holocaust Education Committee works tirelessly on this project and many other programs year-round. Find us at Jewish-NewBedford.org for more information. While on

The use of swastikas as a way to lash out needs to be vocally condemned until it is eradicated. We have a big job to educate people about what the significance of the swastika is to Jews.

Let me answer that for you; they did not. So why would we make a big deal when just one swastika was painted on a tree in Fairhaven? Because we have a moral responsibility to do so in the name of the six million and if no one does I'm going to on behalf of our Jewish community and Jewish communities everywhere. If the police want to dismiss this by saying it is not a hate crime because it was not directed at a specific individual, then their classifications and statistics mean nothing because this was a hateful act. The use of swastikas as a way to lash out needs to be vocally condemned until it is eradicated. We have a big job

the subject of finding us, this is also a message to *The Standard-Times* and South Coast publications. We have always been there for your editors and reporters as a resource for all things related to the Jewish community for years. We are well aware of the financial reality, constant changes and how short-staffed publication have become, not to mention how much harder everything is during pandemic times. However, we are always available to you. So when a reporter tackles such a hateful act, find us and communicate with us. Last week's report missed that input and we should try to correct that together.

IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU

You make everything we do — possible.



You open a child's eyes to the beauty of our heritage. Revive the Jewish spirit in places where it's been all but crushed. Arrive with whatever is needed, in the wake of natural or financial disaster.

You — together with Federation — are at the heart of all of these, and countless other efforts that invigorate and sustain our community. You have the power to do it. **Give today.**

Call or email Amir@JewishNewBedford.org, 508-997-7471



The Year in Review

By **Manya Bark**

“**M**ay you live in interesting times” – an English expression claimed to be a translation of a traditional Chinese curse – resonates with me at this moment. We have struggled under a pandemic for the past two years. With vaccines, it finally appeared as if we were returning to a “new normal” – not quite pre-Covid but a hybrid form. Now we are faced with historic lines being crossed. We have entered an era in which a European country is attacked simply for



existing as a functioning democracy. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed the collective worldview and it is feeling increasingly Orwellian.

This event is our own century’s Phoney War – that period at the start of World War II during which there was only one limited military land operation

on the Western Front, when French troops invaded Germany’s Saar district. The current situation began with Russia’s invasion of Georgia and its occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, followed by Russia’s invasion and occupation of the Crimea. It now seems to be on a dangerous precipice to become a full-fledged world war with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. For the people of Ukraine, it doesn’t matter what it is called – it is a life-and-death struggle for their survival and for freedom, self-determination and democracy itself.

Ukraine has a complicated and blood-smeared history with respect to its Jews. As a country it has been forging a hopeful future – which culminated in the democratic election of Volodymyr Zelensky. Mr. Zelensky has transcended the eternal status of the European Jew as an outsider – and it is a cause for optimism. If a Jew in Ukraine (that has seen the darkest depths of antisemitism) can be accepted as a leader and a hero, then surely there is hope for Jews the world over.

On the other hand, with Russia’s rage and frustration about Ukraine becoming more and more visible, antisemitism is being used by Russia to stir up old hatreds. Former Russian president and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev’s article in October 2021 described Zelensky as “disgusting, corrupt, faithless” and having repudiated his Jewish faith. The regime has doubled down on this with the most odious attack one can make on a Jewish person by calling Zelensky “a Nazi collaborator.”

Putin’s inner circle consistently pulls out language from the history of antisemitism to indicate its strength while fanning the flames of antisemitism both in Ukraine and in Russia. It has since culminated in Putin’s obsessive (and false) justification of

Ukraine – even if hitting mass graves and its markers were not the primary intent of the “smart bombs.”

The war will have far-reaching consequences across the globe. Egypt is already gearing up for food shortages, especially wheat. After all, Ukraine is known as the “breadbasket of the world.” With food shortages nations will become even more susceptible to strife. Another concern for Jews is the increase in antisemitic conspiracy theories online; as if the Covid/vaccine conspiracy theories weren’t enough with which to contend. A report conducted by the Network Contagion Research Institute that studies how hate manifests on social media concluded that antisemitism has been a feature of the widely publicized Russian disinformation cam-

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his war of aggression to “de-nazify” Ukraine. The regime’s vileness in muddying the waters with odious disinformation, antisemitism and ethnic divisiveness can be seen in the bombing of Babi Yar. The attack clearly demonstrates how Mr. Putin wants to symbolically erase not only Jewish memory but annihilate the possibility of a democratic, multi-ethnic

paigns, especially during American and European democratic elections. They become a “force multiplier for mainstreaming Jewish hatred in the form of conspiracy.” The Ukrainian War is as much a war of disinformation as it is information – and as a result we have already seen an uptick in antisemitism online associated with the invasion.

I am reminded of the national poet of Ukraine, Taras Shevshenko, and the words from his poem Four Poems – Testament:

... and break your chains.
Water your freedom
With the blood of oppressors.
And then remember me
with gentle whispers
and kind words
in the great family
of the newly free.

We Jews were and are part of that family, especially now.

On a much less gloomy note, the Federation has continued to provide for the community throughout 2021. After adapting to the realities of Covid and the new medium of Zoom, the Federation has been able to bring to our community events that in the past one could only dream about. One of those events that stands out was the Zoom conversation with our very own Federation director Amir Cohen and two of the renowned Israeli actors from the Netflix series Fauda. It was certainly a coup that Amir was able to not only bring that to our own community but to other American Federations as well.

We have also enjoyed two chef series that have linked us to other Jewish Federations across the country. Our community in a much more tangible way is now connected to the other Federation communities with the new medium of Zoom. It was an amazing feeling to be on a Federation Zoom attended by over 4,000 people (many more had to join through Facebook Live) when Art Spiegelman spoke about his graphic novel Maus which had recently become a nationwide hot topic after a Tennessee school board decided to ban the book.

Yom HaShoah programming and the International Holocaust Day commemoration remain accessible on

Zoom as well as in person. The Federation continues its annual Passover food delivery to those in need. Our Trunk of Tolerance project is now in more schools than ever before. We are in the process of developing a separate series of Trunks specifically aimed at high school students. The Trunk of Tolerance project has been and continues to be an enormous success.

Finally, in closing, we should all find inspiration and put into practice Zelensky's message in his 2019 inaugural address. He told lawmakers not to hang his

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picture in their offices but to hang their kids' photos instead, and look at them each time they make a decision. If we as a Federation, as a Jewish community, want to survive and leave a thriving legacy and "home" for the next generation of Jews, we need to look at our children, grandchildren and the young Jewish people around us as we make decisions for our future.

The Federation needs you to continue your support in order to not only provide support for Klal Yisrael (with education, events, Passover supplies, services for those in need, scholarships, etc.) but our future Jewish community. After all, we are called to be a "light unto the world." Our Jewish values are many of the same ones that the Ukrainian people are fighting to retain; and so we need to continue in supporting our own community and those that espouse the same values.

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Thank you for your generous response to the 2021 Passover Appeal, which raised \$4,114 to purchase kosher-for-Passover foods for members of our community in need.

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Barbara Kaplan, Fran Levin,
Linda and Geoff Post

Gifts made in memory of:

Ruth Ades, Bud Bier, Mark Gitlin,
David Glicksman, Elaine Nasoff

Ukrainian Support

Thank you to the members of our community who joined the campaign launched by Federations throughout North America to support Ukraine. At the time this issue went to press Susan Barnet, Jack Belkin, Amir Cohen, Wendy Friedman, Milton Glicksman, Ellen Hull, Kenneth Lipman, Judith Mickelson, Marsha and John Onufrak, Maura and Michael Zeman made contributions allowing our community to add more than \$3,000 to the \$30M raised nationwide.



Please join us
for the
Jewish Federation of
Greater New Bedford's

Annual Yom HaShoah
**HOLOCAUST
REMEMBRANCE DAY**
Memorial Service

IN PERSON

*at the Holocaust Memorial
in Buttonwood Park*

on Thursday, April 28TH
@ 5:45 PM

*Look for a Zoom link and program
updates in the weekly Bulletin.*

Sitting Idle Is Not an Option

By Janet Freedman

A swastika spray-painted on a large tree in Fairhaven last fall has become “just another” of many instances of antisemitism in Massachusetts. Very recent incidents at Curry College, Mount Holyoke College, a Newton high school and a Marblehead middle school suggest a highly disturbing pattern.

The Fairhaven incident prompted us as members of the local Jewish community to organize and create a new leadership group within the Federation to exclusively discuss and spearhead an action plan.



The effort began in January with the intention of not only supporting one another in the face of rising antisemitism, but also engaging in mutually respectful conversations on often contentious topics - such as how to distinguish critique of Israeli politics (for example) from antisemitism, and whether a swastika on a

schoolroom wall (or a tree in Fairhaven) is an instance of youthful ignorance or hateful intent. We hope our dialogues will lead to specific and positive actions to combat antisemitism.

I was honored to moderate the initial conversation that Manya Bark, Martin Lipman, Ilana Offenberger, Marsha Onufrak, Amir Cohen and Rabbi Kanter joined. They affirmed the many positive things that have been done to raise awareness of antisemitism including the Trunks of Tolerance in a number of area schools and Yom HaShoah artwork, essays, and speakers on the Holocaust in the community at large. The recent state mandate for genocide and human rights education in middle and high schools may provide funding to build on the excellent educational projects that the Federation's Holocaust committee headed by Cindy Yoken and Marsha Onufrak and others have been doing for a number of years.

The superb programs offered by the Bristol Community College Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies are well attended by members of that campus community, and many area teachers are applying the learning gained in the Center's workshops and lectures in their classrooms. Yet participation by our greater New Bedford Jewish population is low. Following our first meeting, Marsha Onufrak met with the Center's director, Ron Weisberger, to express the group's desire for a stronger working partnership. Ron will attend future meetings at which we can explore how to publicize BCC pro-

grams more widely, provide transportation to some events and/or invite some of the speakers to extend their visit and offer a program addressed specifically to our community.

grams more widely, provide transportation to some events and/or invite some of the speakers to extend their visit and offer a program addressed specifically to our community.

Countering antisemitism can be advanced by becoming more knowledgeable about Jewish history and showing pride in our Jewish identity and traditions. In addition to classes offered by the Rabbi and Cantor at Tifereth Israel, members can also share news of seminars and programs that we might attend “together” via Zoom, and offer references to books, articles and films to complement Amir's suggestions in the Bulletin. Marty Lipman recently modeled this by sharing detailed notes he

prepared on a lecture by Deborah Lipstad.

Other goals of the Antisemitism Discussion and Action group are to reinvigorate the programs of the Center for Jewish Culture at UMass Dartmouth and create alliances with South Coast groups and institutions, such as the NAACP and the YWCA. Rabbi Rafi Kanter is actively involved with inter-faith efforts and also has volunteered to serve on the clergy council of UMass Dartmouth's Center for Religious and Spiritual Life. The Federation

Countering antisemitism can be advanced by becoming more knowledgeable about Jewish history and showing pride in our Jewish identity and traditions.

board of directors recently approved the provision of funds for cultural programs and outreach work with Jewish students at UMass Dartmouth, which Manya Bark will be spearheading. The group also intends to support Ilana Offenberger's research and teaching at the university where for the past couple of years the position of director for the Center for Jewish Culture has been vacant. We hope this new initiative will help fill that void in the coming months.

As the conversations continue, I hope new members join in. Please invite anyone who is interested to reach out to me at jfreedwoman@gmail.com.

At the Bristol Holocaust and Genocide Center It Is Business as Usual

By **Ron Weisberger** and **Marsha Onufrak**

Covid did not take a break this year and neither did the Bristol Holocaust and Genocide Center. The Center sponsored a variety of informative and exciting programs, including talks by survivors, scholars, and journalists – all available to the public via Zoom.

Upcoming speakers and music programs held in-person and on Zoom include:



The Trunk of Tolerance has become a main feature of our Holocaust education initiatives

- April 7 - Andreas Algava, a survivor of the Holocaust in Greece, will speak on his family's experience. The program will begin at 4:00 PM in the L Building Rm. 101 and on Zoom.

- June 12 - Documentarian and musician Yale Strom will present a Klezmer concert and screening of the film *The Last Klezmer*, in partnership with Temple Beth El, Fall River. The Program will begin at 2:00 PM in the College Auditorium, Jackson Art Center.

- October 30 - Mark Ludwig will present a very special premiere of an original musical composition he commissioned, inspired by our Button Project. Time and location TBA.

Typically, the Center has sponsored conferences as well as exhibits and concerts with Holocaust themes. Although curtailed by Covid, live programs will be resumed with a conference on African Genocide in the spring of 2023. Further programs for fall 2022 and spring 2023 are also being planned.

The Button Project, with its goal of collecting 1.5 million buttons to represent Jewish children murdered during the Holocaust, is nearing completion. A suitable monument containing the buttons is in the planning stages. Several local schools have volunteered to count and sort these buttons. Plus, we are reaching out to art teachers at local schools to use some of the buttons to create works of art based on the students' understanding of their lessons on the Holocaust.

The Center has also expanded its outreach to the regional public and parochial schoolteachers and students. A Summer Teacher Institute will be held this July and August, offering professional development for area teachers. Its theme is "The Power of Words: Building Respect and Tolerance Through Lessons of the Holocaust." In addition to a Holocaust survivor speaker, Holocaust experts will cover best practices and methods for teaching about the Holocaust and include topics like Propaganda, Eugenics, Bystanders, Resistance, the Kindertransport, and Antisemitism today. Graduate credit will be available in collaboration with Lesley University.

In addition, the Center has been collaborating with the Federation's Holocaust Education and Memorial Committee to provide regional schools with Trunks of Tolerance that contain books, posters, curriculum lessons, and brief biographies. Cindy Yoken, Marsha Onufrak, and participants on the

Holocaust Committee spearheaded this project. Members of the Center Advisory Committee, including Gary Brown and Marsha Onufrak working with Center Director Ron Weisberger, have been collaborating with regional schools to put the Trunks in their libraries on a three-month basis so

The Center sponsored a variety of informative and exciting programs, including talks by survivors, scholars, and journalists –all available to the public via Zoom.

multiple teachers can borrow and utilize the materials in their classrooms. To date, the Trunks have been sent to Bishop Stang High School, Old Rochester Regional High School, Durfee High School, and Bristol Community College. Other schools in the region have also requested the Trunks and will receive them in fall 2022 and beyond. All the schools receive a permanent collection of the books contained in the Trunks, courtesy of the Jewish Federation.

The collaboration between the Jewish Federation and the Bristol Holocaust and Genocide Center has been and continues to be very important. Given recent events in this country and internationally, education regarding both the history of the Holocaust and other genocides as well as ongoing dangers is more important than ever.

In Collaboration with
The Jewish Federation of New Mexico
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To discuss “The Big Trends Shaping the World
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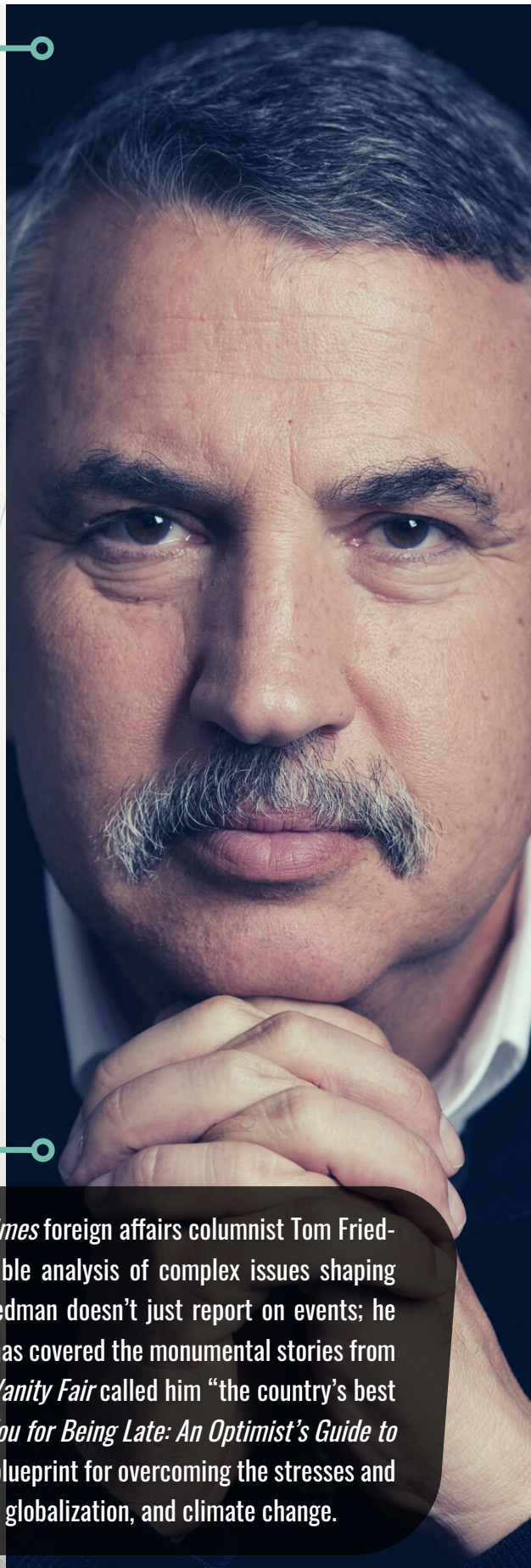
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Sunday, April 10 , 2022
at 9 PM

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When you register with your email a Zoom link for the
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CAN'T MISS EVENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Sunday, April 10, 9:00 PM



**PULITZER PRIZE WINNING JOURNALIST
& AUTHOR TOM FRIEDMAN**

A bestselling author of *The World is Flat* and *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Tom Friedman is renowned for his direct reporting and accessible analysis of complex issues shaping the world. Join us as he discusses "The Big Trends Shaping The World Today: Economic, Technology & Geopolitics."

Thursday, April 28, 5:45 PM



**YOM HASHOAH ANNUAL
COMMEMORATION**

Please join us for the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford's Annual Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day Memorial Service in person at the Holocaust Memorial in Buttonwood Park.

Wednesday, June 29, 7:00 PM

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE JEWISH
FEDERATION OF GREATER NEW BEDFORD**



Jewish Federation®
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**Look for Zoom links in weekly *Bulletin* email
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