

There's No Such Thing As Just One Swastika

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? 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 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 JewishNewBedford.org for more information.

While on 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.

Sadly, a similar act occurred last week in a parking garage in California. The act in California IS being treated as a hate crime.

Sincerely,
Amir Cohen - Executive Director
Manya Bark – President
Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford