



JEWISH MESSSENGER

Tevet 5780
Winter 2020

The Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford



ANTI-SEMITISM IS HERE



“Anti-Semites seem to think it is open season on Jews. And maybe, given the many incidents, they are right.”

— Deborah Lipstadt

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A Terrifying New Normal

By Amir Cohen

It is New Year's Day, my birthday. I deliberately waited for the new year before I wrote this column. To say that anti-Semitism was my choice as the theme for the *Messenger* is to give me too much credit. This theme tragically picked itself. It was that kind of a year. Too often this past year, and those among you who read my weekly *Bulletin* know this, I have quoted and referenced Deborah Lipstadt. As a general rule, if Lipstadt features more frequently than the Beatles and Gal Gadot combined it is a sign of trouble.



I was on my way back from Israel a little over a year ago when the attack on Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue took place. A few months later, moments after landing at Logan from another Israel trip, I rushed to the Jewish cemetery in Fall River where I took the pictures that make the cover of this *Messenger*. Attacks and displays of anti-Semitism are reported daily. A horrific murder of Jews in a New Jersey supermarket and a machete attack at the home of a Monsey rabbi during a Hanukah candle lighting ceremony happened only days apart. This is a terrifying new normal I for one never imagined would take place in America.

The *Messenger's* main objective is to thank you, members of our community, for your generosity. As a community we rise, we stand firm, and we educate. We are responsible for one another. There isn't left or right, secular or Orthodox, Israeli Jews or American Jews. There can't be us and them.

It's us, all of us. One big tent, our tent, and we are all in it together. In the past few years, here at the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford,

we have invited and included members of all faiths in many of our programs, events and activities and they have invited us in return. Our leadership receives messages of support after anti-Semitic incidents from the Islamic Society and the Inter-Church Council because they share our pain. It happened too often last year.

Last year I realized that I have lived exactly half my life in Israel and the other half in the U.S. Never during my years in Israel did I doubt that Israel would prevail no matter the odds. And I feel the same way about Jewish life in America today.

My first job after I moved to America from Israel was with the *Forward* newspaper. In the early 1900s the *Forward* was a vehicle through which thousands of American Jews learned how to become Americans. Perhaps that first job was part of my indoctrination. I certainly learned a lot about Jewish history on these shores. I was optimistic then and remain so now. World Jewry depends on a strong American Jewish community as well as a strong

and prosperous Israel. As an American I never for one second consider that the response to anti-Semitism would be to go back to Israel - even if years ago former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told me as much at a meeting with the staff of the *Forward*. Conversely I never think to suggest to my Israeli friends and family to move here after a suicide bombing on a Tel Aviv bus. Both seem equally foolish proposals to me. Israel always has taken care of itself and will continue to do so. Our community (and Jewish communities throughout North America) stands strong in the face of this most recent wave.

I hope all of us continue to wear our Star of David necklaces, stop covering our kippot with baseball caps and proudly light our menorahs and place them in a window. I know I did. In fact last year I lit two menorahs - just because. And at the same time we show our faith, ignore our fears, and become a light onto nations I know we will continue to educate. We do so with the Trunks of Tolerance (see page 11) here in New Bedford area schools, through programs we bring to our community, and through ongoing dialogues and advocacy efforts that have become part of our day-to-day routine.

It will more likely come with added costs (for security), but this is only a detail. Nothing will stand between us and our mission, nor will we ever be deterred. Many of you who are listed in the Honor Roll on pages 6-7 have supported our Federation for many years. There is no one

better positioned to see these efforts and outcomes, and to be proud of them. When a gunman reached the doors of a synagogue in Halle,

Germany, this past Yom Kippur, the people worshipping inside were safe and secure because of the generosity of people like you. Donors to the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford empowered our global partners to save lives.

In his famous letter to the Jewish community of Newport, RI, President George Washington wrote, "For happily the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." His words are as important now as they were 230 years ago and they can also help us remind our non-Jewish friends that combating anti-Semitism, protecting communities and educating new generations is not just the job of the Jewish community but a project for our nation. And if my confidence and optimism aren't enough, the first donation made to our federation this year was made with the following message: "Sending love from a gentile in this time of violence and hatred." Our first president it turns out was spot on.

Thank you for your past and future support.

"For happily the Government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

— President George Washington, August 1790

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



Banding Together In Solidarity

By **Manya Bark**

This past summer I assumed the role of president of the Jewish Federation of New Bedford. I undertake this new role with great sincerity. Jews in the wider world and in our own community are entering into (at least in our generation) an unfamiliar space that is less tolerant of Jews and at times outright hostile and violent. We only need to look in our own backyard in Fall River and the desecration of Hebrew Cemetery there in March of this year to be acutely aware of this new reality.



This new reality means that we need to support the Federation and its programs more than ever. The Federation provides outstanding educational programs that help educate not just our own Jewish community but the greater New Bedford community as well.

Our collaborations with the Islamic community of New Bedford in programs involving photographers and chefs helped foster better understanding and compassion for each other. That compassion was extended

this on a community level in New Bedford with the Federation, there is hope that it can be done elsewhere.

This reminds me of a quote from Rabbi Lord Jona-

We only need to look in our own backyard in Fall River and the desecration of Hebrew Cemetery there in March of this year to be acutely aware of this new reality.

than Sacks, “For though my faith is not yours and your faith is not mine, if we are each free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world.”

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Other programs foster our Jewish identity and connection to Israel through education, programming and activities, allowing us to act on the Jewish ideal of tzedakah.

I want to see these programs continue in the future as they strengthen us as a community and as individual Jews. I would also request that you, the reader, attend an event or two and show your support for the Federation and what it is doing in our community - whether it is educating against hate or providing a fun experience that brings us together, creating a sense of solidarity.

One of my first obligations as president of the Federation was to attend the JFNA conference in Wash-

ington D.C. this past November. There was a new format this year. Participants chose to concentrate on one of three different tracks: community engagement, anti-Semitism and security. I chose the anti-Semitism track as I am keenly aware of the growing problem but at times feel at a loss on how to effectively combat it. I also considered how our own local community and students on college campuses have been affected by

anti-Semitism in making the choice. I felt it was important to gain a better understanding of the problem, to learn what is being done and what we can do as well.

It was wonderful to meet other community leaders and lay people in the Jewish community but more fundamentally to learn from them. The programs were excellent: from speakers in the intelligence community sharing what they are doing to combat hate and what we need to do to remain vigilant; to Professor Deborah Lipstadt, author of *Antisemitism: Here and Now*; to small communities not unlike ours who have implemented security protocols that kept their community safe after being targeted; to breakout sessions where groups brainstormed. It ended up being a very "brain heavy" three days but so enormously productive.

If the conference weren't enough of a reminder of the anti-Semitism we face, there was this disturbing incident. Upon exiting the hotel and while waiting for a taxi to the airport, we were confronted by approximately 10-15 individuals holding placards, one of which stated "Your Rabbi is killing YOU" while a Christian message was being sung to a Jewish song. The trajectory of all the "anti-Semitism" had come full circle.

It is an unfortunate reality that in dark times we often find ourselves banding together in solidarity for comfort and strength. I hope you can support YOUR Federation and community and help not only strengthen us against hate, but empower us through our identity as Jews with core Jewish values. If there was one takeaway I left the conference with, it is that we should never back down and retreat, but rather be proactive. You can be proactive through your financial support of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford and attendance at Federation events. As your new Federation president, I am committed to doing my very best to not only continue the wonderful programming, events and activities that Federation is known for, but to also strengthen us as a community – and that can only happen with your involvement.

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Holocaust Education & Memorial Committee: The Year That Was

By **Cindy Yoken**

Never forget. As Jews the world over, we remind ourselves of the importance of this simple mantra after each new and horrifying instance of anti-Semitism. We tell the story of the six million Jewish lives lost to hate and bigotry through the lens of the Holocaust. We work to effect change, to promote acceptance of all faiths.

The Committee's theme last year — "Exposing the Shoah, What Hate Can Do!" — was chosen at a time when the world is experiencing an uptick in anti-Semitism, when lives have been lost and acts of aggression have increased. Our programming throughout the year reflects the need to educate and advocate within our community and beyond.

The Trunks of Tolerance program makes available to local middle school teachers a collection of books, posters, art supplies and curriculum suggestions centered around the Holocaust. The program started with two Trunks; last year the Federation provided funding for two more. The feedback from teachers and students has been very positive.

One of the teachers involved in creating the Trunks of Tolerance is a member of the Holocaust Committee. Nathan Orié works at Old Rochester Regional Junior High School as a history teacher. For the second time in recent years, Mr. Orié brought a group of students to Europe following their study of the Holocaust. They toured concentration camps and came away from this real-life lesson with a deeper understanding of the atrocities man perpetrates against man. They, in turn, shared what they learned and saw with other students and friends. The Holocaust Committee, through the Federation, was proud to make a donation in support of this endeavor. We were honored to listen to a first-hand account and see pictures from the trip at a board meeting.

The speaker at last year's April Yom HaShoah observance was Albert Garih, a child survivor who was hidden in a convent in France during World War II. He now shares his story as a volunteer with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Following his presentation here, Mr. Garih spoke to about 500 students the next day at Durfee High School in Fall River.

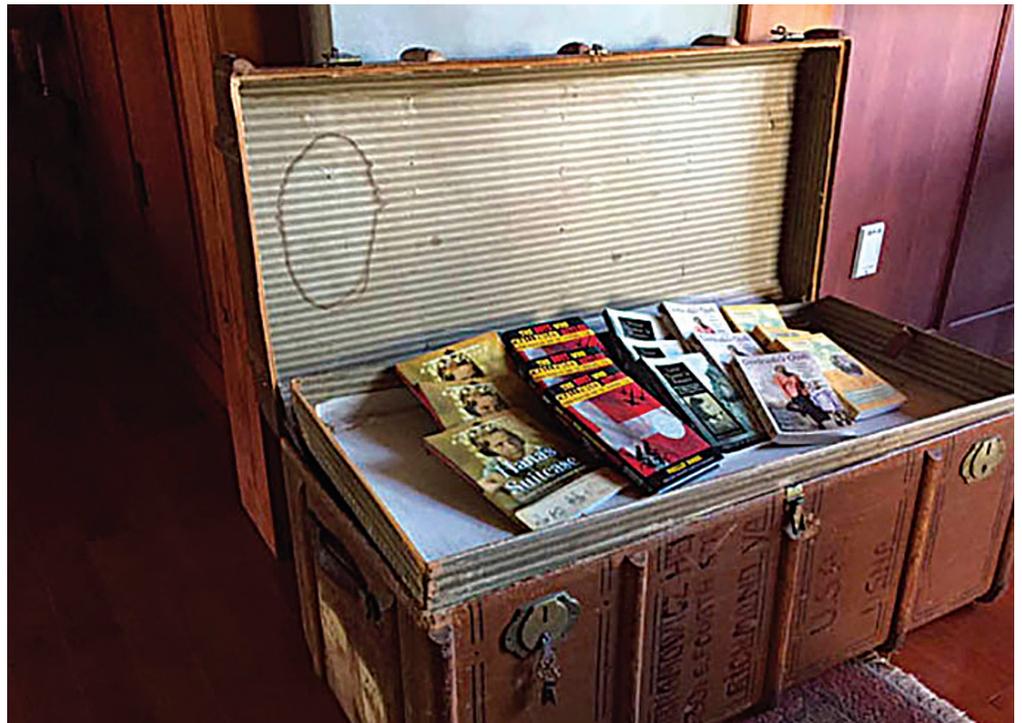
Members of the Holocaust Committee also worked with younger children this year, having been invited into elementary school classrooms to discuss Lois

Lowry's *Number the Stars* in advance of a Zeiterion Theatre performance in April.

Other programming throughout the year — sponsored by BCC, UMass Dartmouth, the Federation and Tifereth Israel — supported our efforts. The Terzin Musical Group comprising survivors of the Terzin Concentration Camp and Carolyn Enger's piano program "Mischlinge Expose" brought music to our community. Authors Henry Oster (*The Kindness of*

For many years, community members have been donating buttons to the Holocaust Center at BCC where students have been working on murals. Two were unveiled in January, one of Anne Frank and the other Steven Ross.

And, finally, I'd like to share news of an ongoing effort to mandate Holocaust education in our state. The proposed bill is known as "An Act Concerning Geno-



What is a Trunk of Tolerance? It's a free source of materials that teachers can borrow to enhance their existing Holocaust curriculum. It is another tool to teach students tolerance and encourage them to be active resisters to prejudice.

the Hangman) and Louise Borden (*The Journey That Saved Curious George*) spoke about their books. We saw the films *Etched in Glass: The Legacy of Steve Ross* and *Who Will Write Our History* about the hidden archives of the Warsaw Ghetto. A teachers workshop and a "Women and the Holocaust" conference, both at BCC, were open to the public.

icide Education" (H.566/S.327). It seeks to amend the Massachusetts General laws and requires that all school districts in the state include a curriculum unit on the Holocaust and genocide.

I look forward to seeing you at the many events we have planned for you this year.



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What is it about a child lighting the Chanukah candles? It's such a simple act, yet such a powerful example of Jewish tradition passing from one generation to the next. Keeping that tradition alive takes people who are passionate about Jewish life and committed to its future. Maybe you're one of these people. If so, ask us about legacy giving. We can help you create a gift that speaks to your values and ideals. **A gift that shines for generations.**

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Trunk of Tolerance Project Grows with Need

By **Marsha Onufrak**

As hate crimes rise across our nation, educators need more tools to teach tolerance in their classrooms.

Especially for children, learning from the past is not about statistics; it's about personal stories. Kids remember Anne Frank hiding in a cramped attic in Amsterdam, peering out the window to streets and parks

sett may borrow these trunks to enhance their existing curriculum and to fulfill Common Core standards. Through these materials, real victims tell their experiences about what happens when people are indifferent to bigotry.

These old trunks contain a variety of age-appropriate, non-fiction books, posters, ID cards, lessons, art supplies

have the opportunity to decorate the trunk with artwork based on their understanding of what they have learned about the Holocaust. When the trunk reaches the next teacher's classroom, the artwork generates a conversation about what these art pieces mean. Then those students may add to the artwork decorating the trunk when it's their turn to pass it along to the next class.



Teacher Jackie Nelson-Eckhardt and students who used the resources in the Trunk of Tolerance.

where she could no longer play, worrying about making the slightest noise while wondering if there would be enough food for everyone trapped there.

It is stories like these, told by children about children, that resonate with local middle students. Four Trunks of Tolerance, filled with Holocaust materials, are now available for teachers or churches to borrow at no cost from the interfaith Holocaust Education and Memorial Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford. Middle schools in Dartmouth, New Bedford, Fall River, Fairhaven and Mattapoi-

and links to other materials from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website. Using first-hand accounts from reliable sources helps to personalize abstract concepts and remind us that those targeted for hatred were parents, students and children just like us. The scope of these materials has been limited to stories of survival, rescuers and resistance.

Each teacher who signs up will get to keep the trunk in his or her classroom for two weeks to incorporate the materials into their lessons. Before they pass the trunk and its contents on to the next interested teacher, students will

Through these materials, real victims tell their experiences about what happens when people are indifferent to bigotry.

Since the project was introduced in 2018 with only one trunk, over 600 students from Normandin Middle School, Keith Middle School and Old Rochester Regional Jr. High School have used the trunk resources. After students learned about the Holocaust, they created an impressive exhibit of artwork, poems and essays reflecting their reactions. Our committee hopes other schools will also create exhibits, which we will display next spring at our annual Holocaust remembrance event.

Go to jewishnewbedford.org to review all the details and to participate in the Trunk of Tolerance project. This project aligns with our committee's theme this year: "Welcoming the Strangers' Children."

CAN'T MISS EVENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

*At the Claire T. Carney Library at UMass Dartmouth
A collaboration with the Center for
Jewish Culture - supported by the Federation*

Tuesday, Feb. 4, 5:00PM



SHIRLY NIGRI-FARBER

Publisher of Brazil's *Shalom Magazine* speaking about the Jewish community in Brazil in "From Immigration to Present Politics."

Wednesday, Feb. 12, 5:00PM



TAL SCHNEIDER

Award-winning chief political correspondent of the Israeli daily *Globes* will be speaking about Netanyahu and Trump's "reciprocal" politics and Israel's third election in less than a year.



April 26 Yom HaShoah Memorial Service & Lecture

In early January 25,000 marched across the Brooklyn Bridge in solidarity saying NO to anti-Semitism. Join us this year as we say "Never Again" at an afternoon ceremony in Buttonwood Park followed by a march to Tifereth Israel. The program features Kurt Kleinmann who came with the children from Vienna after the Holocaust and was adopted by our local Federation member Samuel Barnet.

JEWISH FEDERATION

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