

We all must combat antisemitism

Recent flyers and graffiti underscore the need to work together to combat hate

BY ERIC POST

Guest essay

The Jewish community has been unnerved by a new wave of antisemitic incidents across Long Island. Under the cover of night, antisemitic flyers that have been distributed in several cities across the country also have appeared in Freeport, Long Beach, Ocean-side and Rockville Centre. Antisemitic graffiti has brazenly defaced a sign outside Hempstead's Town Hall and an ex-Marine was arrested in Hawaii for, among other charges, training with a neo-Nazi group in Suffolk County to attack a synagogue.

Antisemitism is the world's oldest hatred. Many conspiracy theories and antisemitic tropes on the flyers that were distributed could have been written 2,000 years ago. "Jews have too much power," "Jews control the media and politics," and on and on. These ideas led to organized massacres and expulsions of Jews from Europe from medieval times through the early 1900s, and ultimately to the

Holocaust, the genocide of six million Jews.

Recognizing what is antisemitism is the first step in understanding its various forms and multiple sources. Flyers and graffiti may seem innocuous, but history has shown time and again that hateful words can kill. They demand as firm an unequivocal response as a physical attack.

Long Island residents can play an important role in combating antisemitism. Education is the first step. The American Jewish Committee's Translate Hate Glossary, found at translate-hate.org, provides 36 antisemitic terms and tropes, their definitions, and how they are used in contemporary context. Identifying these tropes on social media or in professional and personal settings is important. Speaking out against antisemitic tropes is critical. The Translate Hate guide also shows how to report a hate crime and to flag hateful material on social media, whether antisemitic or another form of hate.

Second, let's ensure that



People rally against antisemitism and in support of Israel, in Great Neck in May 2021.

elected officials are speaking out against all forms of antisemitism and hate. AJC has trained many Long Island elected officials on identifying and combating antisemitism. Furthermore, 11 Long Island municipalities, including Nassau and Suffolk counties, have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism, which the U.S. government and dozens of governments around the world use to define antisemitism, spread awareness, and urge education. Now is the time to

activate that definition in our municipalities and work with the 21 Long Island mayors who have signed on to AJC's campaign with the U.S. Conference of Mayors to combat antisemitism.

Third, Long Island communities should unite to combat antisemitism and all forms of hate. If you are not Jewish, ask your Jewish neighbors and friends whether they have experienced antisemitism. Share your experience with prejudice or injustice and become advocates for one another. Long

Island has become an incredibly diverse region over the past several decades. Getting to know each other's communities can only strengthen our capability to counter those who hate. AJC Long Island convenes the Community of Conscience, which frequently brings together 18 diverse groups from across Long Island to combat hate legislatively. Many municipalities have wonderful initiatives like Not in Our Town, interfaith clergy councils, and anti-bias task forces. These groups have tremendous power to transform our communities. Seek to get involved with these initiatives.

With antisemitism and many other forms of hate on the ascendency, are the American values our country was founded upon, and that we hold so dear, being undermined? Asking ourselves these questions and recommitting to the fight against antisemitism, and all forms of hate, is in the vital interest of all Long Islanders.



■ **THIS GUEST ESSAY** reflects the views of Eric Post, Long Island director of the American Jewish Committee.