

NO ONE IS BORN HATING



But too many die because of hate. In only the past year, hatred of other races, other religions, other ethnic groups has led to "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims in Bosnia, religious battles between Hindus and Muslims in India, systematic suppression of Christians and animists in Sudan, the emergence of neo-Nazis, skinheads, and xenophobia in parts of Europe. Tragically, this list could go on and on and touch every corner of the world.

The United States is not immune to hatred either; group stereotyping, cemetery desecrations, assaults, even murders are the proof of that. But we do have something special – a democratic system that values diversity. In a word, it's called pluralism.

What works in our country will not necessarily work everywhere. Still, with almost nine decades of experience, the American Jewish Committee is convinced that there are some universal principles that every society can use to stop the forces of bigotry and to promote understanding among different racial, religious and ethnic groups:

- **Political leaders** must fight group hate in word and deed. This year marks the 50th anniversary of one of the best examples, the leadership of King Christian X of Denmark, who inspired courage in his people to evacuate the Danish Jews to Sweden during the Nazi occupation.
- **Religious leaders** must remind believers what virtually all religions, in remarkably similar language, agree upon. As the Bible teaches, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

- **Individuals** must take responsibility for combating hatred in their own lives, among family and friends. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel are examples of prominent individuals who changed society only after making a commitment to equality in their personal lives.
- **The law** must protect the rights, freedoms and security of all, including minorities, to insure that no one is jeopardized by racial, religious or ethnic prejudice.
- **Schools** must teach tolerance and mutual respect among groups.
- **The media** must exercise the responsibility that goes hand in hand with freedom of the press, reporting fairly and completely.

Are you thinking that this sounds all too familiar, a bunch of clichés? True, people have been saying it for a long time. But they haven't always been doing it. Starting to practice what we preach won't be easy, because group differences are often deeply rooted. But the alternatives are even harder – riots, pogroms, religious wars, ethnic cleansing, genocide.

It comes down to just two choices. We can continue to teach the children of the world to harm and even kill one another, in the name of race or religion or ethnicity, and risk being harmed or killed in return. Or we can teach them to overcome differences and live peaceably, with others, respecting and even celebrating diversity. Which choice would you make for your children?



The American Jewish Committee
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The American Jewish Committee combats bigotry and anti-Semitism and promotes human rights for all. Through programs such as the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, the Institute on American Pluralism, the Skirball Institute for American Values and "Hands Across the Campus," the AJC seeks to nurture pluralism and democratic values worldwide.

*The American Jewish Committee,
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