

ENDURING TENSION

Do we have to live with hatred?

Antisemitism Defined

Known as “the longest hatred,” antisemitism has a history stretching back more than 2,000 years. Antisemitism is hatred or prejudice against Jews. Wilhelm Marr of Germany coined the term in the nineteenth century when groups were often labeled by their languages. Hebrew, the language of Judaism, is a Semitic language along with Arabic and Aramaic. Antisemitism, however, only applies to Jews, not Muslims or any other group.

Antisemitism is spelled two different ways: Antisemitism and Anti-Semitism. The latter implies that there is a “Semitic” group of people and that anti-Semites are against them. As has been shown, the “Semitic” group should also include those who speak Arabic or Aramaic as they are Semitic languages, and thus, anti-Semites would also hate and act prejudicially against them. They, however, do not hate those that speak other Semitic languages, only Jews. Therefore, antisemitism is more appropriate to use as antisemites are not against all speakers of Semitic languages.

Antisemitism is often a result of scapegoating. Antisemites find a reason for problems facing their communities by blaming Jews as the cause of that problem. This was seen repeatedly throughout history (see the Global History gallery guide). Hitler blamed the failings of the German Army in World War I on Jews. By the time Hitler and the Nazis came to power, antisemitism was already a large part of European society. Not only was antisemitism rampant in Europe; it also thrived in the United States, and it still exists today.

As you make your way through the exhibit, we encourage you to keep the definition and history of the word “antisemitism” in mind to better understand how this “longest hatred” developed over time.



Carrying off the Menorah and other spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem depicted on a relief on the Arch of Titus in the Forum Romanum. Courtesy Laurel Lodged from Wikimedia Commons

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Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue
Charleston, South Carolina
Built 1840
Greek Revival Style
Courtesy Library of Congress

A GLOBAL HISTORY

Why do people engage in the same hatreds again and again?

The Dreyfus Affair

Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain on the general staff of the French military, was wrongfully accused, tried, and convicted in 1894 of treason for attempting to sell military secrets to the German government. The evidence against him was completely fabricated, as was shown after the trial. His punishment took place in the Morland Court of the military school in Paris in front of 4,000 soldiers and members of the press. There, they publicly announced his degradation, cut off his badges and buttons, and broke his sword in half; throughout the punishment, Dreyfus consistently claimed his innocence. The French government also exiled Dreyfus to Devil's Island (off the coast of South America). Afterwards, the public began to speak of a Jewish conspiracy surrounding the trial and Dreyfus. His family attempted to prove his innocence. Eventually, evidence given at the trial proved to be false, Dreyfus was retried, but, once again, convicted of treason. Not until 1906 was Dreyfus acquitted of all charges.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Often referred to as simply “*the Protocols*,” this text tells the fictional account of a group of Jewish leaders who met to conspire against the world. Told in the form of the minutes of the meeting, the *Protocols* was first published in Russia in 1903 (in parts) and 1905 (as a whole). Since then, the story has been translated into many languages and disseminated all over the world. American entrepreneur Henry Ford even published sections of the book in his newspaper *The Dearborn Independent*. The point of the *Protocols* is to spread antisemitism, or hatred towards Jews. The *Times* newspaper in London proved the *Protocols* were a forgery in 1921, with parts based on *Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu* (1864) by Maurice Joly. Today, the *Protocols* continues to be published in many languages in different countries, mainly in the Middle East. The Internet also plays a large role in distributing this antisemitic forgery.



A 2005 Syrian edition of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Gift of the Embassy of Israel. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



Maisel Synagogue
Prague, Czech Republic
Built 1893-1905
Neo-Gothic Style
Courtesy Jessica Spengler

JEWES IN EARLY AMERICA

What does freedom of religion mean?

George Washington's Letter

George Washington sent letters like this one to congregations of different religions and denominations all over the new United States of America to show his support for religious freedom. It is interesting to note that only three months before he wrote the letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, they had ratified the Constitution of the United States on May 29, the last of the colonies to do so.

To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island

Gentlemen.

While I receive, with much satisfaction, your Address replete with expressions of affection and esteem; I rejoice in the opportunity of assuring you, that I shall always retain a grateful remembrance of the cordial welcome I experienced in my visit to Newport, from all classes of Citizens.

The reflection on the days of difficulty and danger which are past is rendered the more sweet, from a consciousness that they are succeeded by days of uncommon prosperity and security. If we have wisdom to make the best use of the advantages with which we are now favored, we cannot fail, under the just administration of a good Government, to become a great and a happy people.

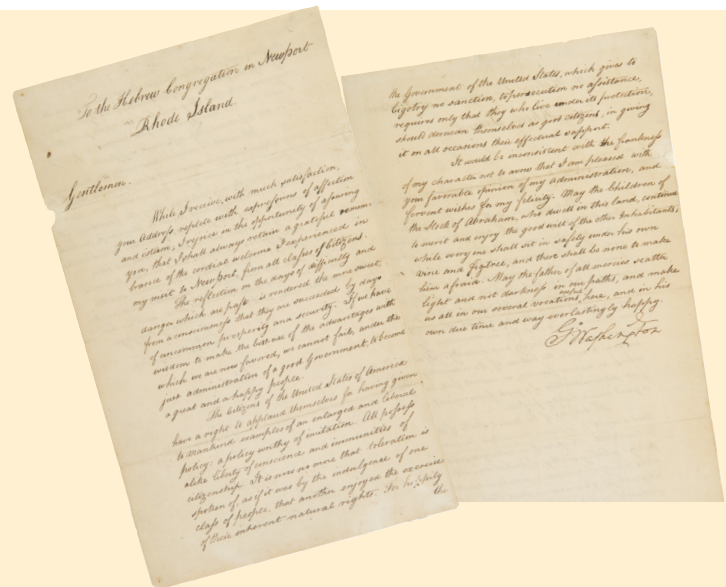
The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

It would be inconsistent with the frankness of my character not to avow that I am pleased with your favorable opinion of my Administration, and fervent wishes for my felicity. May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and figtree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

G. Washington

Another example comes from a letter to the Society of Quakers in 1789:

“The liberty enjoyed by the People of these States, of worshipping Almighty God agreeable to their Consciences, is not only among the choicest of their Blessings, but also of their Rights—While men perform their social Duties faithfully, they do all that Society or the State can with propriety demand or expect; and remain responsible only to their Maker for the Religion or modes of faith which they may prefer or profess.”



Picture of George Washington Letter – Courtesy of the Morris Morgenstern Foundation. Image courtesy of the National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia



The Temple
Atlanta, Georgia
Built 1931
Neoclassical Style
Courtesy David B. King

DEFINING THE NATION

How is identity formed in the individual, the group, and the nation?

Puck Cartoon Analysis

This cartoon image by Joseph Keppler at the top of the panel from *Puck* magazine depicts a Jewish immigrant disembarking from a ship onto American soil. Before he can get to the end of the gangway, he is stopped by businessmen who were once immigrants themselves, their shadows revealing their former selves before they made their fortunes. The caption reads “Looking Backward. They would close to the new-comer the bridge that carried them and their fathers over.”

Why might these men not want a fellow immigrant coming ashore to America?

What sentiment do you think this cartoon was supposed to evoke?

Do you think this cartoon would have been effective at evoking that sentiment?

Why or why not?

The Leo Frank Case

Leo Frank, a member of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation in Atlanta, Georgia, was serving as a superintendent of the National Pencil Factory in 1913, when a young worker at the factory, Mary Phagan, was murdered. Frank and two others (the night watchman and a janitor) were charged with the murder. Antisemitism played a large role during the trial and in the aftermath. Frank was not only Jewish, he was also a northerner. In the early-twentieth century, many southerners believed that northerners and Jews could not be trusted. During the trial, the janitor, an African-American man named Jim Conley, was allowed to give testimony against Frank, a white man, a practice almost unheard of in the early-twentieth century South. The jury eventually found Frank guilty of murder, and the judge sentenced him to death. In June 1915, John Slaton, the Governor of Georgia, commuted Frank’s sentence to life in prison. Many in Marietta, where Phagan was originally from were not happy with this news and decided to take action. A lynch mob, known as the Knights of Mary Phagan, was formed to carry out the original sentence given by the judge. They drove to the jail in Milledgeville, where Frank was held, and lynched him in Marietta near the Phagan-family home in Cobb County. Much was made of Frank’s religion in the press during and after the trial. Some historians even refer to this trial as the “American Dreyfus Affair.” Frank was eventually pardoned in 1986.



Leo Frank, ca. 1910-1915.
Courtesy of Library of Congress



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue
Charleston, South Carolina
Built 1840
Greek Revival Style
Courtesy Library of Congress

BLAMING OUTSIDERS

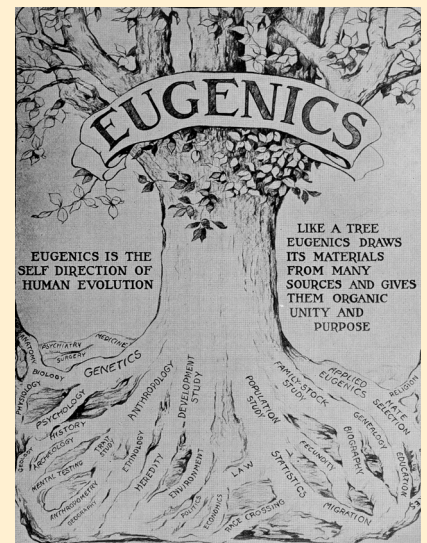
Who is to blame for the problems of a nation?

Henry Ford and *The Dearborn Independent*

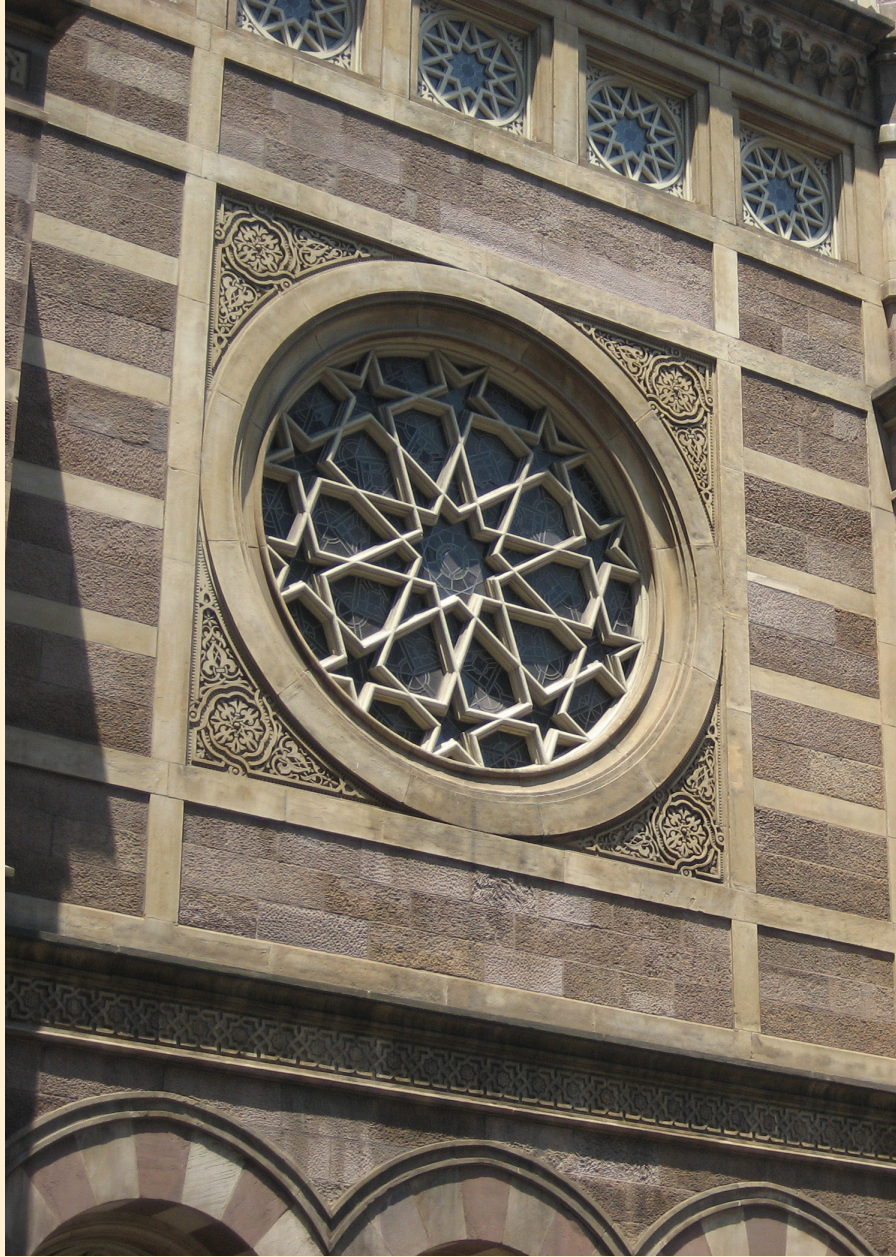
Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company and best known for his development of the assembly line, was also an ardent antisemite. In 1919, Ford bought *The Dearborn Independent*, a weekly newspaper with a small readership. About a year later, the newspaper began printing stories about an international Jewish conspiracy. The May 22, 1920, issue ran the headline “The International Jew: The World’s Problem.” The issue printed on the panel features a story titled “Jewish Jazz – Moron Music – Becomes Our National Music: Story of ‘Popular Song’ Control in the United States.” In this article, the newspaper states “Jazz is a Jewish creation. The mush, the slush, the sly suggestion, the abandoned sensuousness of sliding notes, are of Jewish origin.” The original editor of the newspaper, under Ford, did not care for the new antisemitic tone and resigned. Ford filled the position with someone who would continue this new direction for the next twenty years.

Eugenics

Eugenics is the science of highly controlled reproduction used to keep certain hereditary characteristics in a population and breed out other characteristics deemed less desirable. The goal is to improve the genetic quality of a particular group. This type of nationalistic science was developed in the late-nineteenth century, not by the Nazis. Hitler, however, used eugenics, specifically the type of eugenics practiced in the United States, to develop the Nazi racial ideology to create the “perfect” society. Eugenics eventually played a large role in the murder of individuals with physical and mental disabilities, the precursor to the Final Solution. Some historians have made comparisons between Nazi racial ideology and treatment of Native American populations by the U.S. government. While attempting to invade the Soviet Union, Hitler spoke frequently of the American West. U.S. Jim Crow laws were also influential in the creation of the Nuremberg Laws that segregated Jews from “Aryans.”



Eugenics Tree from papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics held at American Museum of Natural History, New York, August 21-23, 1932. Courtesy of Wellcome Collection



Central Synagogue
New York, New York
Built 1872
Moorish Revival Style
Courtesy Wally Gobetz

RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

Must a nation act to prevent atrocities abroad?

The Role of Shanghai during the Holocaust

Shanghai, China, has a long history of Jewish populations in the city. Before World War II and the Holocaust, Jewish traders from Iraq and Jews fleeing the communist regime in Russia after the 1917 revolution made up a large percentage of the Jewish population in Shanghai. Beginning in 1933, Jews began emigrating from Europe to Shanghai in large numbers. This was one of the few places allowing Jewish immigration at the time; visas were not needed for immigration to Shanghai until August 1939. After 1937, the city came under Japanese control. Jews were forced into an overcrowded ghetto. Conditions were terrible: run-down housing, lack of food, and crime all made life difficult for the Jews of Shanghai. Many Jews, however, made the best of the situation by establishing businesses and enjoying life in cafes and nightclubs. Today, there is still a population of more than 2,000 Jews in Shanghai.



Religious school for Jewish refugee children. Shanghai ghetto, China, September 8, 1944. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Jewish Americans in the Armed Services

During World War II, over 500,000 American Jews (Reform Jews, orthodox Jews, Zionists, non-Zionists, etc.) fought in the United States armed services. Still, Jewish Americans serving in the military faced challenges. The fear of Jews entering the United States military was based on antisemitic stereotypes that Jews were not masculine enough to fight. Once in the military, Jews faced antisemitism from training through the end of their service. In a training manual produced by the U.S. Army during World War I, the government states "The foreign born, and especially Jews, are more apt to mangle than the native-born." Official antisemitism even affected worship practices. In one instance during World War II, Jewish soldiers were ordered to "send your tefillin (leather boxes and straps containing scrolls of parchment worn on the head and arms during prayer) home. Tefillin don't belong in the army." Despite these attitudes there were many Jewish service people who were welcomed and made lasting friendships with people of diverse backgrounds.

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Binswangen Synagogue
Binswangen, Germany
Built 1835
Moorish Style
Courtesy G. Freihalter

THE PRICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

If you have endured injustice, should you fight it where ever you see it?

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

– Rabbi Hillel (110 BC - 10 AD)

Rabbi Jacob Rothschild’s Temple Bombing Sermon

The following passages come from Rabbi Jacob Rothschild’s sermon about The Temple Bombing, “And None Shall Make Them Afraid,” a reference to Leviticus 26:6:

“...What message was the explosion meant to deliver? What effect was it supposed to have? Its intent was clear enough. This was an act designed to strike terror into the hearts of men. It was intended to cause panic and confusion.

Never was a message so garbled in its transmission. Never did a band of violent men misjudge the temper of the object of their intimidation. For this is what really happened: Out of the gaping hole that laid bare the havoc wrought within, out of the majestic columns that now lay crumbled and broken, out of the tiny bits of brilliantly colored glass that had once graced with beauty the sanctuary itself—indeed, out of the twisted and evil hearts of bestial men has come a new courage and a new hope. This single act of devastation has taught lessons which all words, all prayers, all pleas had been unable to teach. It is these truths of which I would speak to you today.

The first of them is that this must be a land ruled by law and not ruled by men...

And that law must be a moral law. This is the second lesson we have learned...

It is in the realm of choice that the third lesson lies...Not even those who perpetrated the very acts themselves bear all the blame. Responsibility rests equally with those good and decent people who choose to remain silent in such a time. ...

No—the lamp of our faith has not been dimmed, nor the word of God blurred. On the contrary, this despicable act has made brighter the flame of courage and renewed in splendor the fires of determination and dedication. It has reached the hearts of men everywhere and roused the conscience of a people united in righteousness. All of us, together, shall rear from the rubble of devastation a city and a land in which all men are truly brothers—and none shall make them afraid.”

What is Rabbi Rothschild advocating for in this sermon?

Why do you think both Rothschild and Washington referenced the same biblical passage?

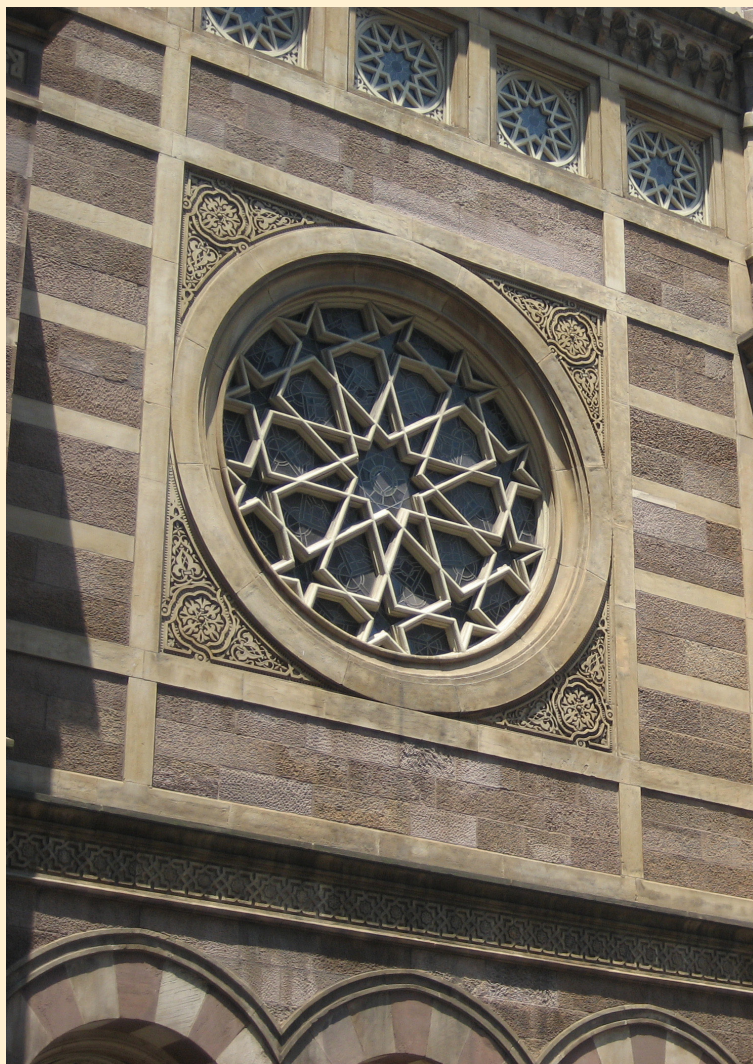
How might you act as an up-stander instead of a bystander?

Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

This image depicts Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (center) and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., marching together with other white protesters in the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Heschel was born in Poland and studied theology in Germany before escaping the Nazis. More interested in the experience of life than anything else, he was “an authoritative voice not only in the Jewish community but in the religious life of America,” according to Reinhold Niebuhr, a Protestant theologian, and concerned himself with what was happening in his own lifetime. In the 1960s and early-1970s, Heschel fought for the causes of the day: for civil rights and in protest against the Vietnam War.



Abraham Joshua Heschel walks with Martin Luther King Jr. on civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives



Central Synagogue
New York, New York
Built 1872
Moorish Revival Style
Courtesy Wally Gobetz via Flickr Commons

COMBATING HATE

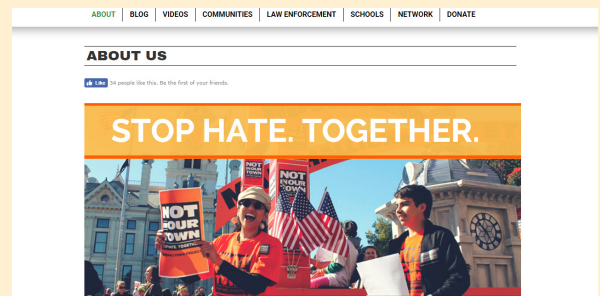
Do we have to live with hatred?

“Not in Our Town”

White supremacist groups began showing up in Billings, Montana, shortly after 1986, when Montana, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Wyoming were declared to be the “Aryan Nation” by white separatists. These groups, including the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis (skinheads), began distributing flyers and newspapers propounding their beliefs in an all-white nation. Homes, businesses, and churches were also vandalized. The Jewish cemetery in Billings was desecrated and the headstones were overturned. The home of a Native American woman was spray-painted with swastikas and words such as “KILL” and “DEAD.” In a show of solidarity, members of the local painters union rallied together and agreed to paint the woman’s home at no charge. When word got out that white supremacist groups were showing up at the African Methodist Episcopal Wayman Chapel to intimidate the African American congregants, white neighbors began coming to services, and the white supremacists left. Billings, Montana, and the “Not in Our Town” movement is a strong example of what average citizens can do together to fight injustice in their own hometowns.

Antisemitism Protest, Billings, Montana

Return to the first panel, Enduring Tension. The photograph of the Billings, Montana, citizens protesting antisemitism is an iconic image of the “Not in Our Town” movement. Notice that the citizens of Billings come from all walks of life: young, old, men, women, police officers, priests, Native Americans, and others. They stand in the middle of a street and railroad crossing, and an American flag hanging from a building behind them. Each protester holds a menorah, the symbol of the Jewish holiday Chanukah. This symbol became an important one in combating hate in Billings. On December 2, 1993, an antisemite threw a cinderblock through the window of the Schnitzer family. Their son was displaying a menorah for the holiday in his window. After this, the town came together to display menorahs (printed in the local newspaper) in the windows of their homes. Due in part to this protest, incidents of hate crimes in Billings decreased. As you examine this image, consider how you might stand up against hate crimes.



Screenshot of Not in Our Town website

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Grande Sinagoga
Plzeň, Czech Republic
Built 1888
Moorish-Romanesque Style
Courtesy Marco Assini via Flickr Commons