

An anti-Semitic attack in Toronto: Hate hits home

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This week, the innocence of a young Toronto family was shattered by anti-semitism. My heart dropped as I drove onto their quaint tree-lined street and saw beautiful religious Jewish children playing on their driveway. A police car was across the street and a television crew alongside.

The husband, a respected Rabbi, showed me the side door to his house. On it was scrawled the words, “F.... Jews” with swastikas above. The perpetrators then entered the garage and left their threatening mark, “Watch your children,” inside, again with swastikas alongside. And later, neighbours of the family found a swastika written in marker on their car as well.

The children who hovered around were seeking answers about what had happened to them and their family. They were happy kids, but they were scared. “Are you here to help us?” one asked. “Yes, I am here to help you, and so are the police, your neighbours and your community. You have a lot of friends,” I replied.

Earlier in the day, their mother told me that they were devising all kinds of ways to protect themselves. “Why did this happen to us?” they asked. “What did we do wrong?” Perhaps its because they left their bikes sometimes on the driveway, she speculated. “Who would have done this to us and why?”

Gently, I explained to the family that they did nothing wrong. This was not their fault. That, like many other Jewish people since and before, they were sadly targeted because they are Jewish. Anti-semitism is one of the most malicious and vile forms of hatred to have infected humanity for thousands of years. It is hatred of Jewish people that brought on the Holocaust, the Spanish Inquisition, pogroms throughout Eastern Europe and centuries of death and destruction.

While some may think the Holocaust and the other horrific events are behind us; that they should be relegated to the history books, they fail to see the ingredients that led to them are once again unfolding before our very eyes.

In April, Tel Aviv University’s Kantor Center reported a 30 per cent rise in violent antisemitism due to far-right Neo-Nazi political parties in Europe and to radicalism.

Jobbik in Hungary, Golden Dawn in Greece and Svoboda in Ukraine have crossed the line. The Kantor report cites 686 attacks in 34 countries. Canada is listed among them.

The victims of anti-semitism, of course, are primarily the people who are directly affected. In this case, these innocent children have been exposed to the most primal and evil hatred to infect humanity. These children and their family, however, will be enveloped with love and support from everyone around them.

Our police force, committed to a pluralistic and safe city, will do its best to put the perpetrator behind bars. The perpetrators will one day feel the shame and the embarrassment of having aligned with the most horrific evil humanity has to offer.

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