

Stronger than Hate: A Photo Essay

Peter Gluck



Courtesy of the Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh.

Pittsburghers from all sectors of the city pushed back publicly and continuously against the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill on October 27, 2018. Here are a few examples of the “anti-antisemitism” (as I call it) that stand out to me as a native of Squirrel Hill. The scope is important for Jews everywhere.



Courtesy of Tim Hines.

Anyone who knows Pittsburgh knows its sports teams are the soul of the city. An independent graphic artist changed the top of the epic symbol of the Pittsburgh Steelers football team from a yellow diamond shape to a Star of David and inserted “Stronger Than Hate,” a quote from the mayor of Pittsburgh, in the space where normally is the name “Steelers.” This non-Jewish artist explained he was helping a Jewish friend move in Squirrel Hill when they heard multiple sirens headed toward the Tree of Life synagogue. Discovering what had happened, he headed home to do his artwork. **It went viral.**

The day after the shooting a banner was hung at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh with the image. Before the game, eleven seconds of silence were held in honor of the eleven killed. Art Rooney II, president of the Steelers from an Irish Catholic family, tweeted:

“On behalf of the entire Steelers organization we offer our support and condolences to the families of the attack on peaceful citizens worshipping at the Tree of Life synagogue. Our hearts are heavy, but we must stand against anti-Semitism and hate crimes of any nature and come together to preserve our values and our community.”



People posted the “Stronger Than Hate” message in store windows and yards.



The Pittsburgh police displayed the image with a decal on their Zone 4 cars.



Courtesy of Rhi Cook.

Two days after the shooting, three Pittsburghers living and traveling in Prague met and spray painted the Stronger Than Hate logo onto the John Lennon Wall.

"...The relationship between the Tree of Life and the Diocese of Pittsburgh has been close over many years. Anti-Jewish bigotry, and all religious and ethnic bigotry, is a terrible sin...we must put prayer into action by loving our neighbors and working to make 'Never again!' a reality..."

– Bishop Zubik, Diocese of Pittsburgh

"...To the victims, their families, and the entire Jewish community of Pittsburgh, know that we mourn with you and stand united against anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry and hatred."

– U.S. Representative Conor Lamb



Courtesy of Douglas Pingree.

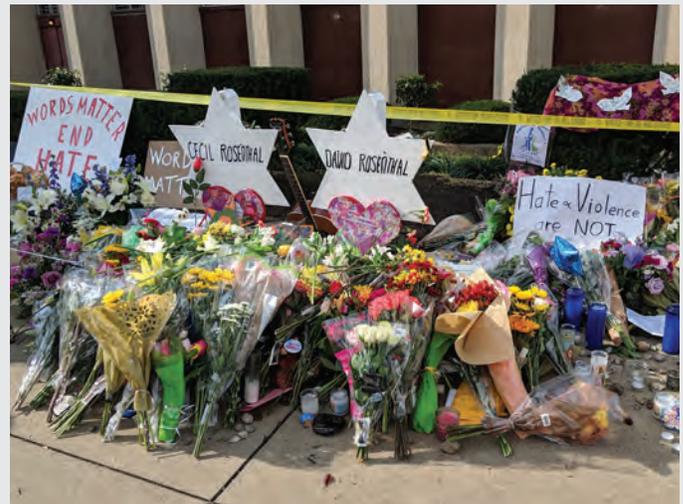
Another person took a t-shirt with the altered logo and proudly displayed it at the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro to share the message. Similar shirts are found online.



I visited the community I grew up in. It continues to feel like a dream. A gardener raking leaves nearby said to me, "All of Pittsburgh feels like it happened to us."



The Pittsburgh Penguins NHL franchise also altered its symbol for several games with a patch that included a second triangle completing the Jewish star. The Golden Triangle is a symbol for downtown Pittsburgh where three rivers meet. The Penguins Foundation donates the proceeds from the auction of team shirts and patches to the families of those killed and injured, including law enforcement who risked their lives to stop the massacre.



Behind the doors of the front hallway of Tree of Life are gifts from all over the world. One of them reads: "We've Got Your Back."



Photo by Alexandra Wimbley. © Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2020, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Hundreds of individuals and groups in the city and from around the world sent similar messages of support and anti-hate. Many sent beautiful art messages, some of which are displayed on a chain link fence that still protects the damaged synagogue. **#HeartsTogether.**



Courtesy of the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Lonnie M., 17 "Hero". Newton North High School, Newton, MA **#HeartsTogether**



Courtesy of the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Sara G, 18 "Peace for the Jewish People." Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland FL **#HeartsTogether.**



Photo by Ellen Sikov.

Left: "Tree of Life" Steel Drum Art Gift from The Dominican Sisters of Houston, Texas

Right: **Calvary Episcopal Church** opened its doors permitting the Tree of Life congregation to utilize its sanctuary for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services. The church covered the inside crosses, in their words, out of respect and friendship. The rabbi of the Tree of Life sounded the shofar for 5780-2019 in a friend's sanctuary.



*William Penn, half-length portrait, facing right, ca. 1897.
Photograph. Paris: Goupin & Co. Library of Congress,
Prints and Photographs Division.*

**William Penn, Esq.
The Charter of Privileges, 1701**

FIRST. No person believing in One GOD, &c. shall be molested on Account of his Religious Persuasion;

BECAUSE no People can be truly happy, though under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties, if abridged of the Freedom of their Consciences, as to their Religious Profession and Worship ...

Borrowing an idea from Quakers, I believe the Jewish people have Friends, spiritual partners, **Mithaverei Yisrael**. The Quakers settled Pennsylvania seeking religious freedom, wanting to build a new kind of society. The response of thousands to the Tree of Life tragedy may prove this idea has taken root.

While there is a documented rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S., there is also a growing, significant non-Jewish rejection of this hatred. Shortly before the anniversary of the tragedy, Pittsburgh City Council established October 27, in perpetuity, as a "Remember Repair Together Day" in Pittsburgh.

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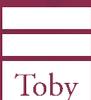
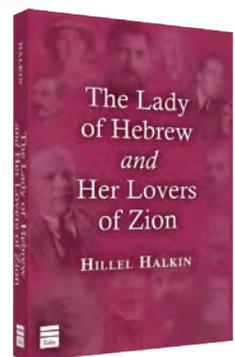
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