

## Anti-Semitism in America

By DENNIS PRAGER

No Jews died in this month's anti-Semitic attack on a Jewish community center in Granada Hills, Calif., and it wasn't the first act of violence against American Jews. Yet the reactions of many Jews to this terrible event have been extraordinarily dramatic. "Wake up, America!" warned a newspaper advertisement last week from the Anti-Defamation League. "Fight anti-Semitism, hatred and prejudice." On the Saturday after the shooting, I was stopped by guards at my own synagogue, not far from Granada Hills.

The Granada Hills attack conjured up memories of European pogroms and the Holocaust—memories that gnaw at every Jew, atheist or Orthodox, left or right. The ADL is right: America must combat anti-Semites—who come in all colors—with the same sense of national purpose it had in fighting the Nazis.

But America's Jews must be careful not to panic, not to let memories of slaughtered Jewish children cloud the reality that America remains the most tolerant, open and Judaism-loving country Jews have ever lived in. Too many Jews still believe what their European grandparents believed: Scratch a non-Jew, and you'll find an anti-Semite. But America is different. America's Christians are not the Christians of Europe past.

Because of Europe's history of Christian anti-Semitism, many American Jews instinctively oppose any public expression of Christianity. This opposition has had a corrosive effect on American life. Sectarian Protestantism, a uniquely tolerant form of religious expression, has been the conduit of American democracy. It has created a uniquely secular government and a religion-based society.

American Jews must stop devaluing the Judeo-Christian basis of America. Without that basis, the moral glue that

binds our diverse civilization will crack, and moral chaos will ensue. The weakening of Judeo-Christian values makes America a less moral place, and one more hospitable to hate groups. When moral norms break down, Jewish security will erode.

When American Jews reflexively oppose any public affirmation of Christianity, they weaken their fellow Americans' attachment not only to Christian values, but to Jewish ones as well. Jewish organi-



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zations that work against posting the Ten Commandments in schools, to take an example, not only are helping to conceal the moral creed that underlies American civilization; they are working to rescind the greatest Jewish gift to America and the world: God-based moral law.

The shibboleths of "tolerance" and "diversity" are no substitute for Judaism and Christianity as the moral bases of America. Tolerance is important, but it's insufficient as a moral guide. Tolerance is amoral; it needs to be morally directed or one can never know what should be tolerated and what should not be tolerated.

The emptiness of tolerance and diversity becomes clear when we consider the question of anti-Semitism. The problem with Jew-haters is not that they are intolerant and don't care for diversity. A desire to see Jews dead—the uniquely defining

characteristic of anti-Semitism—is what moves anti-Semites. To keep replaying the mantra of tolerance and diversity is to avoid confronting an evil that far transcends intolerance.

Intolerance of diversity explains why gentiles once barred Jews from country clubs or devised quotas to limit the admission of Jews into universities. Such acts were surely bigoted, but real anti-Semitism is simply evil. And if we continue to teach about tolerance and intolerance instead of teaching about good and evil, we will end up with tolerance of evil.

The more America substitutes the values of tolerance and diversity for Judeo-Christian values, the less secure American Jews will be. Jews have never been merely tolerated in America. Despite our small numbers, we have been full partners in the historic endeavor to build this country. When Judaism and Christianity are supplanted by tolerance and diversity, America's Jews will become nothing more than an increasingly small minority to whom few of their fellow citizens feel special ties—and Israel will be seen as but another small country.

All racial and ethnic hatred is evil. But Jew-hatred is different. It amounts to hatred of America and its Judeo-Christian soul. Only if America's gentiles recognize this—and if America's Jews recognize that their security depends on that Judeo-Christian soul—will Granada Hills remain an aberration. In Europe, the seeds of modern Jew-hatred were laid by centuries of Christian anti-Semitism. In America, the seeds of anti-Semitism are laid by a rejection of Christianity. In this way, too, America is different.

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