



OPINION: Stand up to hate by standing together

Charles E. Williams



Two weeks ago more than 100 households in Sarasota neighborhoods awoke to find hateful antisemitic flyers at their doorsteps. The hateful messenger was anonymous. And the message itself was absurd: among other things, the flyers blamed the pandemic on a Jewish conspiracy. Such accusations would be laughable if we didn't have past knowledge of how deadly such falsehoods can be.

This antisemitic hate crime could have been easily forgotten and dismissed. Its perpetrators were sloppy and amateurish. No blood was spilled, no property damaged. Few people were affected, and the impact was small. So, some would say, why make a big deal about it?

Because antisemitism is a virus of the mind. It starts with such small acts of hate. And if unchecked, it then spreads to deadly pandemic proportions across the population. Early outbreaks are the best time to contain this disease. That's when we have a fighting chance to stop it.

This equally applies to all outbreaks of racism and prejudice.

Antisemitism is but one variant of this virus of intolerance and hatred. In the United States alone, African Americans, indigenous peoples, Latin Americans, Asian Americans, the LGBTQA+ community and a host of "others" have been

victimized by minds infected by different strains of hate. When hateful attacks threaten any community, members of every community should respond.

The proper response is not to say, "It's not my problem." The proper response is to say, "I'll stand with you."

We all share a common cause, even though that doesn't mean we're all the same.

Each persecuted and marginalized community in America has its own unique set of historical horror stories. Every privileged community bears its own historical responsibility. But whatever your origin or orientation, we all share the same duty. We all share a duty to stop the spread of any form of hate – and to act quickly at the very first hateful sign.

Racists dream of a homogenized humanity. Thankfully, their hateful dream has never come true – and it will never come true. Difference is the only thing that all people have in common. Our diversity is our reality. That's what racists hate, but it's exactly what we love.

I serve as the board chair for Embracing Our Differences, and we don't merely recognize human diversity –we celebrate it. This affirmation is at the heart of who we are. We don't support each other because we're all the same. We support each other because we're all so beautifully different. And we will stand up to those who don't support our beautiful diversity.

Racism and prejudice in any form is a disease. Our solidarity is the cure.

Let's stand together. And let's stand up to hate whenever we see it.

Charles E. Williams is the board chair of Embracing Our Differences. He serves as a judge in Florida's 12th Judicial Circuit. His comments are his own, and they do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the judiciary.