



In recent months, there have been thousands of acts of hate and violence throughout the US against blacks, Muslims, Jews, immigrants and refugees, people who identify as LGBT, and more. Hate crimes against these groups of people continue at an alarming rate.

Amidah, a Hebrew word meaning *standing up*, refers to unarmed spiritual resistance during the Holocaust. The ability to *stand up* for what is right, especially at times of despair, stress, and danger, is what enables good to triumph over evil and compassion to triumph over hate. This is the strength in upstanders like Miep Gies, who brought food, comfort, friendship, and support to Anne Frank and her family during the Holocaust, even at great personal risk.

The dangerous hatred that consumed the world during the Holocaust is not over. We all must practice Amidah; we all must stand up today to protect our friends, neighbors, loved ones – and strangers.

STAND UP

Stand up for people who are being targeted. Show support and kindness for them.

- When you see someone being victimized, stand safely with him or her. Quietly and calmly offer simple words: “I’m here with you” or “Your safety is important to me.”
- Send a note, bring a meal, and offer friendship.
- Help the victim to file a report with the local police and with the FBI, which monitors all hate crimes and hate incidents.
- Document the incident and speak to the press.

There are many wonderful examples. In Montgomery, Alabama, a black family moved into a formerly all-white neighborhood. People sent hate mail and threw nails at them. A woman left a rose and a card, telling them, “You are not alone.”

CONFRONT

Confront those who are speaking and acting with hate. Try to defuse the situation.

- When someone you know makes a hurtful comment, speak up. Communicate to the perpetrators that these words or actions will not be tolerated. Say to the perpetrator, “This isn’t ok; you probably don’t really mean this. Think about how you’d feel if someone acted (or spoke) like this to you.”
- Keep your voice - and yourself - calm and controlled. Say “Your words are hurtful to me and to (him or her).”

Baylor University student Natasha Nkhama, from Africa, was walking to class when a white student shoved her off the sidewalk and said, “No n-----s on the sidewalk.” Two students she didn’t know defended her, asking the perpetrator what he was doing. He responded with a racist and hateful comment. Following the incident,

Natasha posted a video about the incident on Twitter. Students from Baylor organized #IWalkWithNatasha, and the next time Natasha left class, 300 students stood waiting to walk with her to her next class. In response to the students, faculty, and administrators who stood up for her, Natasha said, “To whoever defended me that day, I don’t know who you are, but I thank you for being an example to everyone on campus.”

TRANSFORM

Transform our communities into places of warmth and welcome.

- Reach out to new immigrants and others who might be targeted by violence and xenophobia and welcome them. Share a meal, have a cup of coffee together, or go for a walk.
- Organize a rally, vigil, or other public event in an area where people have been targeted by hate. Put up positive symbols to replace the negative ones. Repaint graffiti with images of inclusion and care. Put up ribbons or turn on porch lights as symbolic gestures.
- Hold events such as a film screening or panel discussion to raise awareness about xenophobia and hatred. Show the PBS film “Not in Our Town,” about the successful confrontation against white supremacists in Billings, Montana, or “The Letter,” the story of Lewiston, Maine and how the good people there united against anti-immigrant hate.
- Arrange public conversations with people of different backgrounds to encourage sharing, compassion, and understanding.
- Have a festival with food and music from different religions, lifestyles, countries, and cultures.
- Engage with the mayor, the city council, and business and community leaders to develop policies for an inclusive community.

A 6-year-old Jewish child in Billings, Montana placed a Chanukah menorah in his bedroom window. Someone threw a brick into the little boy’s window. The townspeople in Billings united in response to this incident, which was part of a string of hate crimes that year, including racist graffiti on a Native-American woman’s home and the desecration of a Jewish cemetery. Nearly 10,000 members of the community responded by placing paper menorahs in their own windows that holiday season. This courageous act sent the message to perpetrators that this behavior was not tolerated, ‘Not in Our Town.’

We can all stand up.

Bias is learned at home and in our communities. Together, we can teach acceptance to our children, our peers, and our neighbors. Together, we can practice Amidah and empower spiritual resistance to overcome hatred.

Anne Frank said, “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”