

C O N T E N T S

TREE OF LIFE



Patrick Henry

Pg. 7

The cure for Racism is cancer

Stefan Merken

Pg.2

He thought for himself



Chiune Sugihara (1900–1986)

Amanda Whitbred

Pg. 3

Long Time JFPer celebrates Lift Every Voice and Sing



Michael Robinson

Pg. 4

Rabbinical View on Violence

Rabbi Michael A. Robinson: 1924–2006



Climate Change

An Existential Threat to the U.S., Israel, and the World

Richard Schwartz

Pg. 8

David K. Shipler

Pg. 10



The Demons Within

Rising Anti-Semitism

*From Where I Sit***He thought for himself**

Stefan Merken

Great moral heroes are rare. For most of us the chance to make a virtuous choice comes only in small personal decisions (“Shall I tell the cashier she gave me too much change?” “Shall I offer the weak old lady my seat?”). But every now and then history gives someone the chance to make an epic personal decision.

Chiune Sugihara got his in the summer of 1940.

Born into a comfortable samurai family on an appropriately noteworthy date (January 1, 1900), he grew into an extremely bright student, learned Russian, and became a diplomat on his way to building an excellent career, with various diplomatic posts. At the same time, he showed an unusually strong tendency to think for himself: He studied philosophy, converted to Greek Orthodox Christianity, and was married for a short time to a Caucasian woman. As his diplomatic career developed, he also became increasingly appalled by the mindless cruelty of Japanese forces in Manchuria and China.

The Sugiharas decided: Humanity came first.

In early 1939 Sugihara was sent to open a consular office in Kaunas, the temporary capital of Lithuania. He and his wife soon became close to the local Jewish community, which comprised a full quarter of the city’s population; they were honored guests at the Chanukah celebration that year. But by that time Germany had

overrun Poland, and Lithuania became a political cul-de-sac for escaping Jews; it was the only route east into Russia but no one could cross the border without a visa for another country.

As consul-general, Sugihara had the authority to issue Japanese visas, valid for entry into Russia. Over and over he begged Tokyo for permission to do so, and each time he was told “absolutely no visas for anyone who lacked proof that they could travel on from Japan.” He was ordered not to discuss the subject again.

In mid-1940 Russia invaded Lithuania. They closed the border to local Jews, but Polish refugees could still cross over with foreign visas. Realizing the Nazi net was

tightening, the swelling mass of refugees was desperate. That summer, Sugihara was ordered to close the consulate and leave. He requested and received a short extension.

Late July was crunch time. One morning the Sugiharas woke to find crowds milling around their house (the consulate). Hundreds of Jews faced certain Nazi killers with nowhere else to turn. The Sugiharas decided: Career be damned, humanity came first. He saw it as a choice between the commands of his government and God’s dictates. From that moment on, he spent every waking hour, day after day, signing and stamping visas allowing Jews to leave. Hundreds of Lithuanian Jews were saved from certain annihilation. Even when finally forced to evacuate he left his forms and official stamp for others to carry on.

As expected, his diplomatic career was finished, and he submitted with grace, claiming to the end that what he did was only natural, nothing special. In 1969, weak and impoverished, he was finally discovered and contacted by a survivor then living in Japan. When the news got out, hundreds spoke on his behalf from around the world.

Sugihara lived his last two decades as a great hero, immortalized a year before his death at Yad Vashem; his family has been honored in many ways by Israel and world Jewry. His story is the subject of at least one documentary film, and many Japanese today take great pride in his memory. So should we all. ☆



Chiune Sugihara (1900–1986)

STEFAN MERKEN is Chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

The SHALOM Newsletter will not be published in January.

The entire JPF Board and Editorial Staff wish you and yours a very Happy New Year.

*Great Antiwar films***Breaker Morant**

Directed by Bruce Beresford, Australia, 1980

This is the story of Australian soldiers during the Boer War against whom phony murder charges are made in order to facilitate the political machinations of bringing the war to an end. It illustrates, quite well, how soldiers treated by the state as nothing more than fungible resources for its exploitation can be sacrificed both on and off the battlefield. ☆



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Music and Activism

Long Time JFPer celebrates Lift Every Voice and Sing

Amanda Whitbred

Activism informs his life...and his music.

This article originally appeared in the Fall 2018 issue of *The Swarthmore College Bulletin* (Vol. CXVI, Issue 1). Ken Giles is from the Swarthmore class of 1971.

Ken Giles was just 15 when, sitting in the House of Representatives chamber, he heard President Lyndon B. Johnson tell a joint session of Congress, “We shall overcome.” Those words quoting the famous song, spoken in support of the Voting Rights Act, had a profound impact on Giles: The music of activism would become a major cornerstone of his life.

In that spring of 1965, Giles was a congressional page, going to school on the top floor of the Library of Congress, and reporting to the Senate for work. He shared his memories in the film *Democracy’s Messengers: The Never-Before-Told Story of Young Americans on Capitol Hill*.

“Being a page influenced me throughout my life,” reflects Giles. “It confirmed my belief that we can use government to change our society to fulfill the lofty goal of treating everybody equally.”

Since retiring from the federal government, Giles has taught the violin. Performing with the DC Youth Orchestra Program, Giles’s students play both classical and protest songs, learning the power music has “to teach and document social change.”

In June, thirty (30) of his students played labor and civil rights songs at a conference, experiencing an echo of Giles’s 1965 epiphany.

“It was glorious—my students were playing songs like ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing,’ and the audience was doing just that,” says Giles. “In that moment, you realize the power of music.” ✧



“My life has been guided by two principles: trying to improve our society through good government, and finding ways to promote justice and peace,” says Ken Giles, pictured here conducting his students as they play labor and civil rights songs.

Photo by John Parks



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*Rabbinical View on Violence***Rabbi Michael A. Robinson: 1924–2006***Rabbi Michael A. & Ruth Robinson*

The late Rabbi Michael Robinson was a long-time congregational rabbi and served as head of the Jewish Peace Fellowship for many years. He wrote the article below.

Michael Robinson

We had heard about the Japanese fighting men in the propaganda we were fed, yet they seemed not too different from us.

When I was 17, I was a student at North Carolina State College following my lifelong dream of studying to become an architect. World War II was on. It was a difficult time to be a student. Daily, we heard of the advancing German armies and the threat of extermination of European Jews. We Jews had canonized Franklin Delano Roosevelt and were naïve enough to believe that saving Jewish lives was a central objective of the war.

I shared the common wisdom that Hitler must be stopped. It was as if I had heard the first half of Gandhi's statement that one must resist evil but had not heard the second part: that the ideal way to resist evil is non-violently. So, caught up in the war fever all around me, I enlisted in the Navy. I served in the Navy's amphibious forces in the southwest Pacific on an LST Landing Ship Tank disgorging vehicles or men right onto beaches. Because I was an electronics technician, I never fired

a gun, thank God.

One time we had our cargo deck filled with Japanese prisoners taken, I believe, on one of the islands. We would go below deck to look at them squatting in a position we in the mountains of North Carolina called "hunkering down." We had heard about the Japanese fighting men in the propaganda we were fed, yet they seemed not too different from us

quiet, passive, waiting. Language barriers kept us from speaking with them.

We had all heard too that Japanese would rather commit *hara-kiri*, or suicide, than accept dishonor. One of my buddies got the idea of leaving a hunting knife on the ledge in the tank deck, right in view of our prisoners. After several days when we delivered our prisoners, the owner recovered his knife. Not one of the 150 prisoners had been moved to use it to escape the dishonor of being captured. We learned, much to our disappointment, that the things we were taught about the enemy were not necessarily so.

By the time I was discharged near the end of April 1946, the world had changed. Hardly a month later I received a letter from the Navy offering me a bonus and advancement in rank if I reenlisted to protect my country against the Soviet menace. Just a few months before the Soviets had been our allies and the heroic defenders of Stalingrad, but now they were enemies. My growth continued. I have never since allowed the government to tell me who is my enemy and whom I am supposed to hate. In fact, I have learned to hate injustice, cruelty, violence and suffering. As the ancient rabbis taught: Hate not the wicked but the wickedness.

Though I never knew anyone who had become a rabbi and was never close to a rabbi, the calling grew slowly in me. To prepare myself, I went to Cincinnati to apply to the Hebrew Union College (HUC) for the Reform rabbinate. In the summer of the

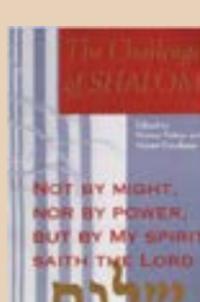
1946, while preparing for entrance exams at HUC, I met Joe Felmet, who lived in my town and whom I had never really known, though he had appeared in a community theater with one of my sisters. Joe had been a conscientious objector during the war, doing alternative service in a mental hospital. I had never heard of conscientious objection but the

moment Joe explained it to me, I knew that was what I was, and should have been all along.

While I spent my summer learning enough Hebrew to translate the book of Genesis and identify all the verb and noun forms, Joe spent his summer going through the requirements to take bar exams. He had read for the law after graduating from the university and had been on the first Freedom Ride, arrested in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on a technicality, and served time on the chain gang. Of the twenty-three (23) states that accepted read-

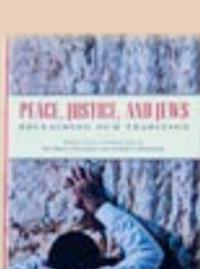
JPF's existence bears witness to the legitimacy of conscientious objection as an authentic expression of Judaism.

Continued on next page

***The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice***

Edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman

Highlights the deep and powerful tradition of Jewish non-violence. With reverence for life, passion for justice, and empathy for suffering, Jews historically have practiced a "uniquely powerful system of ethical peacefulness." *The Challenge of Shalom* includes sections on the Tradition, the Holocaust, Israel, Reverence for all life and Personal Testimonies. \$18.95 per copy, plus \$5 shipping.

***Peace, Justice, and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition***

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken.

A landmark collection of contemporary progressive Jewish thought written by activists from Israel, the US and the UK.

Publishers Weekly called it "literate, thought-provoking" and "by no means homogeneous" and which looked at "from all angles, the idea that editors Polner and Merken believe reflect the most basic attitude in our Jewish heritage."

Publishers Weekly concluded: "There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice."

\$25.00 per copy, plus \$5.00 for shipping

Continued from page 4

ing for the law, not one would permit anyone convicted of a felony to take the bar exam. In the Southern states, violating segregation laws was a violent affront to the accepted standards of the people and a serious felony. Joe, therefore, never got to practice law. We were good friends that summer and when I left for Cincinnati, he gave me the names of two people, members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and of that first Freedom Ride, who became co-conspirators in the beginning of my lifelong career of nonviolent resistance of laws, which I believe on the basis of my religious faith to be unjust and wrong.

At HUC I discovered the Jewish Peace Fellowship, which was founded in 1941 to support Jewish conscientious objectors during World War II and whose very existence was a witness to the legitimacy of conscientious objection as an authentic expression of Judaism, a position which the Central Conference of American Rabbis had affirmed in the 1930s. I learned that one of the professors at the seminary, Rabbi Abraham Cronbach, was one of the three founders of the JPF (the others were Rabbi Isidor Hoffman and Jane Evans) and I became a member of the small group that met from time to time at his home. Rabbi Cronbach lived his teachings. During WWII, German prisoners of war were housed in Cincinnati. Crony used to raise

money in the Jewish community for gift packages to take to these young men, imprisoned far from home. I don't need to tell you that the local Jewish community pressured the college to get rid of this man who—they believed carried his unwillingness to hate too far, and his insistence that love is the ultimate way. Many years later I learned of Edda Servi Machlin's family and the German soldier they befriended. Edda, a member of my former congregation and the author of the book *The Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews* (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1981), was from the village of Pitigliano, Italy, where her father was the Orthodox rabbi. When the Germans occupied Pitigliano, there was a German soldier, a young man far from home, whom her parents made a member of the family, frequently having him as a guest for dinner. That German soldier was the one who came and warned them that the Germans were rounding up Jews and was therefore responsible for saving their lives. They responded to him in a humane way, and he to them.

The Bible itself, the root of all of this, is not a consistent document. It is a people's self-understanding of its origins. It is a human document. Much of it flows, as Martin Buber taught, from the human encounter with the Divine. Everything is in it. We have one strain in the Bible, the self-account of

His feisty people, fighting its way through history, claiming all the time that its battles to displace the Canaanites from their land was the will of God.

(Aside: In my religious school eighth-grade class, Mark Davidoff asks me to come in. He's upset because the kids in the class raise questions about whether the Israelite conquest of Canaan wasn't similar to the European conquest of the Americas, pushing the indigenous peoples off their lands. I compliment them on their moral sensitivity and their unwillingness to say something is okay just because our ancestors are the ones who did it and claimed their conquest was God's will.)

Martin Buber, while still in Germany, met with a group of German theologians and declared his absolute commitment to nonviolence. One of them demanded of him: "What about Saul and Agag the King of the Amalekites?" You remember the story: Samuel tells Saul to take no prisoners when going into battle with the Amalekites, led by their king Agag. Saul identifies with the king and takes him alive. Samuel admonishes him for not following the will of God, takes Saul's sword and kills Agag. Again, the question "What about Saul and Agag the king of the Amalekites?" Buber, with tremendous respect for the Bible, remains silent. Again: "What about Saul and Agag?" And Buber replies: "I do not believe Samuel understood the will of God."

However, alongside the story of the people fighting their way into Canaan is another biblical story that begins with Abraham.

Abraham was a desert sheik a very prosperous sheik. He and his nephew had large flocks. Remember the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot when they entered the land? There is a quarrel or fight between the herdsmen of Abraham. Abraham simply tells Lot and his herdsmen to choose first. If you go to the left, we will go to the right. If you go to the right, we will go to the left. In other words, Abraham says that the best land and the most water are not worth fighting over.

Yet another scholar, Martin Bergmann, in his book *In the Shadow of Moloch: The Sacrifice of Children and Its Impact on Western Religion* (Columbia University Press, 1992), has agreed that the story of the binding of Isaac, which we read on Rosh Hashanah was, in the first instance, intended as a strong protest against human violence, a rejection of violent aggression which in ancient days among Semites took the form of the ritual murder of children. When the Divine voice pleads with Abraham, "Lay your hand upon the child," it represents a new, emerging consciousness moving beyond violence.

When Moses spends forty days and forty nights on the mountain of God, time which I believe he spent in meditation, he has an encounter with God. Whether it is a Christian mystic, a Hindu or Buddhist mystic, the path to the experience is culturally conditioned. But on top of the mountain the experience is identical. It is out

of time. It is out of space. And it is wordless. But words flow from the experience. For Moses and for many Jews that followed him through the centuries flows the knowledge of what I must now do. The culmination of the words that flow from Moses' experience culminate in Thou Shalt Not Kill. Several centuries later, after King David completes the conquest of the land, the Book of Chronicles tells us that David is not allowed to build a Temple of God because David was a man whose hands were bloody from battle. The Bible is telling us that violence, even the violence of the state and its armies, comes under the judgment of God. The Torah had already

told that no iron could be used in preparing the stone of the altar. Iron is used to make weapons of war, to injure and to kill. The altar of God Israel is a place to ask forgiveness for acts of violence.

The rabbinic Judaism of the Talmud and the Midrash is much clearer in its rejection of violence in all forms, including capital punishment, another form of communally-sanctioned violence, which the Bible itself sanctions for certain crimes, though there is no evidence that it was ever carried out. In contrast to the claim of the Christian scriptures that the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death, the rabbis declared that a Sanhedrin that sentences one person to death in 60 years shall be known as a bloody Sanhedrin.

The rabbis had great respect for the Bible but they were not guilty of making an idol out of a literal interpretation of the Bible. It is when the Psalmist implores God to destroy the wicked that the rabbis tell us we are to read

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Rabbi Abraham Cronbach (1882–1965) was one of the founders of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.



David with the Head of Goliath by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio Vienna 1607

Continued from page 5

not *harasha*, the wicked, but we are to read *resha*, wickedness. In the Bible the Israelites are commanded to make war against the seven Canaanite nations. In response the rabbis repeat that this is a mandatory war in which every Jew must participate. There is just one detail: None of the seven Canaanite nations existed any longer in the time of the Mishnah and Gemara. We were commanded to engage in war against non-existent nations.

During the Vietnam War, both my wife Ruth and I spent a great deal of time working with COs. Young men called, wrote, and came to see me. Our job was to help them in identifying the spiritual roots of their conscientious objection to participating in war in any form. It was a matter of questioning, and over and over again the young men would return to the biblical affirmation that humans were created in the image of God, and that all life is sacred. This is what is taught in Mishnah Sanhedrin, when the question is asked why God began the creation of humanity with one man, Adam. The rabbis responded that, "One person alone was brought forth at the time of creation in order to teach us that one who destroys a single human soul is regarded as the destroyer of the whole world, while one who preserves a single soul is regarded as the preserver of the whole world." In the same passage from Tractate Sanhedrin, in dealing with the question of why creation began with one man, Adam, it states that, "one man was created the common ancestor of all so that the various human families should not contend with one another saying that my ancestors are better than yours."

During the Vietnam War, I was also called as witness at a number of courts martial when a young man seeking discharge from the military as a CO was being tried by a military court for refusing to obey orders. I remember one particular trial at Fort Dix, New Jersey. The young man had refused to board a plane for a *second* tour of duty in Vietnam after having filed for discharge as a CO and being turned down. The presiding officer of the court martial asked me, as the expert witness, if there was anything in the Jewish religion that would demand that a man refuse to obey orders.

I responded that we are taught that there are three things that a person cannot do even to save his own life: commit incest, idolatry, or take a life. The prohibition against incest is an old and strong one. Idolatry at the time of the Mishnah (as in Mattathias's time) was to give obeisance to the emblem of the state, to worship the nation. To do that is to blindly follow orders, to ignore your conscience. We are required to do as Mattathias did: refuse to bow to the state even at the risk of our lives. If someone were to hand you a gun (or a sword) and order you to kill another or be killed, the Talmud bids us to accept death rather than to take a life. "Who is it to say," the rabbis asked, "that my blood is redder than his?" I must tell you that my testimony did not save the young man from prison. You will be interested to know that for several years after his release from incarceration and his "dishonorable" discharge from the army, he worked on an Indian reservation, *servicing others*.

Jews like to believe that Jesus' calling upon the people to love their enemies (which is certainly difficult to do) is Christian, so it gets us off the hook. I don't know what Christians do to get themselves off the hook, but I do know what Judaism teaches. In the book of Proverbs there is a command, "If your enemy hungers, feed him, if he thirsts, give him to drink." In other words, branding someone or some group the enemy does not eliminate your human responsibility to him; in fact, it doesn't get you off the hook at all, and is hardly different from your responsibility to those you love. This is biblical Judaism, hardly different, it seems, from the Jew Jesus' teaching. It is the way of nonviolence. And every Passover we need be reminded of the Midrash of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea.

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, according to the biblical story, the Egyptian armies drowned. In a very graphic ancient song in the 15th chapter of Exodus, the Israelites celebrated the victory, their redemption and the enemy's deaths. In the most incredible language, God is referred to as *Ish milchamah* man of war. The Midrash tells us that when the angels in heaven heard the Israelites singing, they joined with them. God then rebukes the angels and asks them why they are singing. They respond: "We are singing because your children, the children of Israel, have been saved." "Do you not know," responds God in this midrash, "that the Egyptians who drowned this day are also my children?" It was impossible for most of the rabbis of the Talmudic-Midrashic period to envision violence as a legitimate Jewish option. Compassion for the enemy is expressed to this day in the Pesach seder when the plagues are read. Because Egyptians suffered from these plagues, wine is removed from the cup of redemption as each is read.

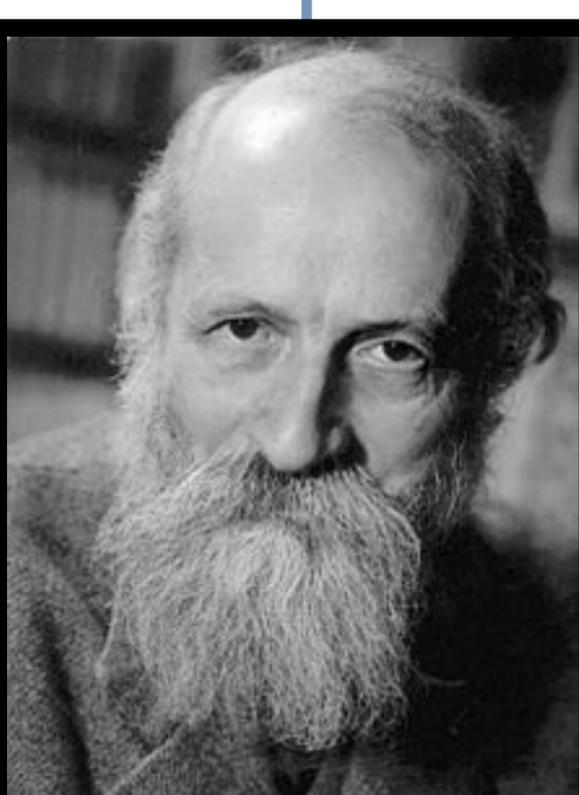
The teaching of nonviolence continues in our tradition. Aaron Tamaret, a Polish rabbi who was at the first Zionist Congress in Basle in 1906, called for Jews to turn our back on violence. In the Yishuv, as Jews began to settle Palestine, there were those who called not for a Jewish state, but for a binational state where Jews and Arabs

would build a country together, with two official languages, without Jewish domination. Chaim Weizmann, a member of this group called Ichud, or unity, wrote in 1929 that it was not even necessary to have a Jewish majority in Palestine. Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, the first president of the Hebrew University, were equally committed to nonviolence. Albert Einstein was offered the first presidency of the state of Israel but refused so that he would be free to work for peace. Einstein and Buber, incidentally, were both affiliated with the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

Today there are many in Israel who have come to understand that "there is no way to peace, peace is the way." Some of these are soldiers who have refused to be members of an occupying army and have gone to jail over and over again rather than serve beyond the

Green Line. There are COs in Israel, where the right to conscientious objection is not recognized by law. Some have been imprisoned, while others have been quietly assigned to alternative service. And in Israel and the U.S., there are a growing number of people both Jews and non-Jews committed to working for economic and social justice and peace through nonviolent means. ✪

Judaism identifies three things that people cannot do even to save their own life: commit incest, idolatry, or take a life.



Martin Buber

Democracy in the Waiting Room

The Cure for Racism Is Cancer

Patrick Henry

I first encountered MD Anderson Cancer Hospital in Houston during the summer of 1976. The best friend I had ever had, Richard Frank, was being treated for a particularly aggressive lymphoma. His twin brother gave him the bone marrow and I provided the white corpuscles. Richard died that summer at the age of 37 with his young wife and two-year-old son at his bedside.

These still painful memories washed over me last night as I read Tony Hoagland's essay, "The Cure for Racism Is Cancer," in the September 2018 issue of *The Sun Magazine*. The acclaimed poet died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 64 a month after his essay appeared.

Perhaps only an unconventional and provocative poet, acerbic and acutely ironic,

could have bequeathed us this heartfelt gift. Hoagland invites us, first, to sit with him in the waiting room at MD Anderson and observe the different skin colors, religious preferences, mother tongues, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds of those who belong to the community of cancer which absorbs these differences so that "you have more in common" with those around you "than with your oldest childhood friends." Here in this true democracy, "You are all simply cancer citizens, bargaining for more life."

Then, once treatment has begun, Hoagland focuses on the multi-ethnicity of those taking care of patients of all colors with spontaneous "decency, patience, compassion, warmth, and good humor." Here again, I recall that, even 42 years ago, the community of cancer that showered its love on Richard was largely black and Latino. I remember too, vividly, pushing Richard in his wheelchair late one night on the children's floor past a room with a large Bald Is Beautiful poster picturing children of all races.

Tony Hoagland has no illusions about human tolerance but he believes, "more than ever, that at the bottom of each human being there is a reset button." It's difficult to get at and often to get to it "requires that the ego be demolished by circumstance." But if we reach that button and press it, "the world might reshape itself."

Hence his counsel: "America, that old problem of yours? Racism? I have a cure for it: Get cancer." Take a walk down Leukemia Lane, he advises, in the Republic of Cancer which shatters our prejudices and allows us to discover our common humanity.

The paradox here is that racism is the cancer eating away at the heart of our community. In the space of

roughly forty months, from June 2015 to October 2018, we have experienced the slaughter during Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South

Carolina, that resulted in the death of nine parishioners, and the worst anti-Semitic attack in our nation's history at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh where eleven congregants were murdered during Shabbat services.

We must be careful to call these atrocities by their proper names. The Holocaust was not primarily an example of man's inhumanity to man. It was primarily an example of man's inhumanity to Jews. The attack on the Tree of Life synagogue was not, as it has often been called, "an attack on all people of faith." It was an attack on the people of Jewish faith. So too, the slaughter at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church was a vicious act of hatred directed at black Americans.

"We must be careful to call these atrocities by their proper names."



The Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where eleven (11) people were murdered in an anti-Semitic shooting on October 27, 2018.

If we are ever to make progress in eliminating racism in our society, we must know precisely at whom that racial hatred is directed. Today it is clear that our cancerous racism is directed primarily at Jews, blacks, LGBTQ persons, Latinos, and Muslims. The recently released FBI report shows too that hate crimes across the United States spiked 17 percent in 2017. This marks a rise for the third straight year and a staggering 37 percent increase in anti-Semitic hate crimes.

Outside of MD Anderson, how can we treat the cancer that is destroying us? To begin simply, let's reach for the reset button and try to discover our common humanity: by attending Shabbat services, particularly if we don't know a word of Hebrew; or, without any knowledge of Arabic, services at our local mosque; or a Catholic mass in Spanish; or services at an Evangelical Black Church; or campus and church meetings of LGBTQ-friendly groups. By progressively enlarging and enriching our communities by these and innumerable other ways, we also let the members of these groups know that they are not alone, that we stand with them.

Who knows? The world might in fact begin to reshape itself. ☆

PATRICK HENRY, a Holocaust scholar, retired from teaching at Whitman College in 2002. Now he is part of the Road to Recovery Program at St. Mary's Cancer Center in Walla Walla. He drives patients to and from their chemo and radiation sessions.

Climate Change

An Existential Threat to the U.S., Israel, and the World

Richard Schwartz

The greatest threat to humanity today is climate change. The world is on a path that would lead to an uninhabitable world by the end of the century unless major changes soon occur. And it might happen much sooner because of positive feedback loops (vicious cycles) that could result in a tipping point when climate change spins out of control.

An outrageous exaggeration, like those in the past that predicted an end to the world? Not according to science academies worldwide, 97 percent of climate scientists, and virtually all peer-reviewed papers on the issue in respected scientific journals, argue that climate change is largely caused by human activities and poses great threats to humanity. All the leaders of the 195 nations at the December 2015 Paris Climate Change conference, including Israel and the U.S.A., agreed that immediate steps must be taken to avert a climate catastrophe, and most of the nations pledged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. While this is an important step forward, climate experts believe that even if, and it is a very big if, all the pledges are kept, it would not be enough to prevent future severe climate disruptions.

A 2018 report by the respected Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change argued that there is very little time left to make the major changes needed to prevent climate disasters.

A 2018 report from the Trump administration indicated that the world is now on a path that would result in a 7-degree Fahrenheit (almost 4 degree Celsius) increase (since the beginning of industrialization) by the end of this century. This is almost four (4) times the current increase of 1-degree C and would mean an uninhabitable world.

The Pentagon believes that climate change will increase the potential for terrorism and war.

Another major negative factor is that the Pentagon and other military groups believe that climate change will increase the potential for instability, terrorism, and war by reducing access to food and clean water and by causing tens of millions of desperate refugees to flee from droughts, wildfire, floods, storms, and other effects of climate change.

The world is already seeing the many negative effects of climate change. Contrary to the views of many climate-change deniers, the world's temperature has significantly increased in recent years. Every decade since the 1970s has been warmer than the previous decade and all of the seventeen (17) years in the 21st century are among the eighteen (18) warmest years since temperature records started being kept in 1880, the only other year in the top being 1998. 2016 was the warmest year globally, breaking the record held previously by 2015 and before that by 2014, the first time that there have been three consecutive years of record world temperatures.

Just as a person with a high fever suffers from many of its effects, there have been many negative effects of the increased global temperature. Polar icecaps and glaciers worldwide have been melting rapidly, faster than scientific projections. This has caused an increase in ocean levels worldwide with the potential for major flooding. Glaciers are "reservoirs in the sky," providing important water for irrigating crops every spring, so their retreat will be a major threat to future food supplies for an increasing world population.

There has also been an increase in the number and severity of droughts, wildfires, storms, and floods. Of course, there has always been such climate events but climate change has made them more destructive. For example, there are three (3) climate-related factors that increase the severity of hurricanes:

1. More moisture evaporates in warmer temperatures and warmer air holds more moisture;
2. The seas have risen, which increases storm surges; there is already 'sunny day flooding' in coastal cities like Miami, Florida due to higher tides;
3. The waters are warmer, which adds more energy to storms.

California has been subjected to so many severe climate events recently that its governor, Jerry Brown, stated that "humanity is on a collision course with nature."

Unfortunately, prospects for the future are truly terrifying. Climate experts believe that we are close to a tipping point where climate change will spiral out of control, with disastrous consequences, unless major posi-

tive changes soon occur. The potential for such a tipping point is increased because of self-reinforcing climate events (positive feedback loops). For example, when there are major wildfires, which is happening increasingly in our warmer world, trees which are a sink for CO₂ are destroyed and much carbon from the burning trees is released into the atmosphere, increasing the potential for additional wildfires and other climate events. Also, when ice which is a very good reflector of the sun's rays melts, the darker soil or water that is revealed absorbs much more of the sun's energy, causing more ice to melt, starting a potentially very damaging vicious cycle.

Another alarming factor is that, while climate experts believe that 350 parts per million (ppm) of atmospheric CO₂ is a threshold value for climate stability, the world has now reached 414 ppm, and the CO₂ level is continuing to increase, although recently at a slower rate.

Reducing climate change is an especially important issue for Israel as it is in the sixth year of a drought, the Sea of Galilee is at a dangerously low level, a rising Mediterranean Sea could inundate the coastal plain where much of Israel's population and infrastructure are located, and an increasingly hot and dry Middle East makes terrorism and war in the region more likely.

Many people believe that climate change has become

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Trift Glacier, Switzerland, retreat of ~1.17 km from 2006 to 2015.



Major wildfires increase the potential for additional wildfires and other climate events

Major wildfires increase the potential for additional wildfires and other climate events

Continued from page 8

a political issue, mainly promoted by liberals like Al Gore. However, the conservative group ConservAmerica (www.ConservAmerica.org), formerly known as “Republicans for Environmental Protection,” is very concerned about climate change threats. They are working to end the denial about climate threats and the urgency of working to avert them on the part of the majority of conservatives, but so far with very limited success.

Given the above, averting a potential climate catastrophe should be a central focus of civilization today, in order to leave a livable world for future generations. Every aspect of life should be considered. The world has to shift to renewable forms of energy, improve our transportation systems, produce more efficient cars and other means of transportation, produce far less meat and other animal-based foods, and do everything else possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

As president emeritus of Jewish Veg, formerly Jewish Vegetarians of North America, I want to stress the generally unknown or disregarded importance of shifts toward vegetarian and vegan diets. Animal-based agriculture is a major contributor to climate change, largely due to the emission of methane from cows and other farmed animals, since methane is from 72 to 105 times as potent as CO₂ per molecule in warming the atmosphere during the twenty (20) years that the gas is in the atmosphere.

Two studies support this conclusion:

1. A 2006 UN Food and Agriculture Or-

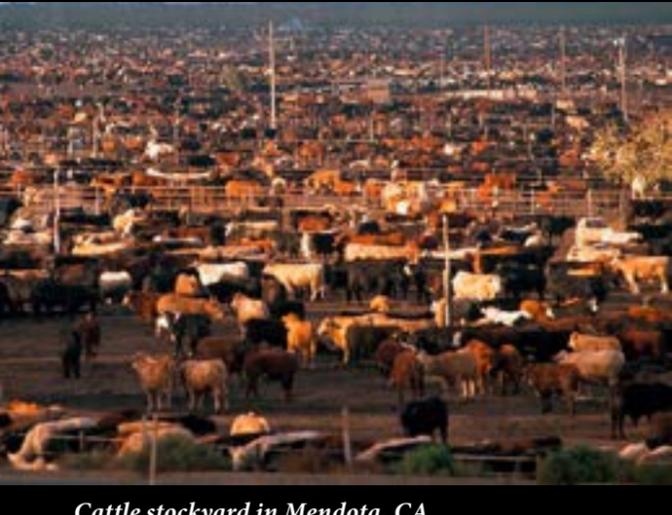
ganization study, “Livestock’s Long Shadow,” found that livestock agriculture emitted more GHGs, in CO₂ equivalents, than all the cars, planes, ships, and other means of transportation worldwide combined.

2. A 2009 front-page story in *World Watch* magazine, “Livestock and Climate Change,” by two environmentalists associated with the World Bank found that the livestock sector was responsible for at least 51 percent of all human-induced GHGs.

So, a major shift away from animal-based diets is essential to efforts to avert a climate catastrophe.

Because the threats are so great, it is essential that everyone make this issue a major priority and undertake every effort to make dietary and other lifestyle changes, in order to help shift our imperiled planet onto a sustainable path. Unfortunately, “denial is not just a river in Egypt,” and most people today are, in effect, rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, as we head toward a giant iceberg.

When I hear of a couple getting married or a baby being born, I wonder how their lives will be affected by our rapidly warming world, with its rising oceans and increasingly severe storms. This is especially relevant to me as I write this as I have happily had three grandchildren married in the past two years. ✧



Cattle stockyard in Mendota, CA



A field of tomatoes

A major shift away from animal-based diets is essential to efforts to avert a climate catastrophe.

RICHARD SCHWARTZ is the founder of Jewish Vegetarians of North America and co-founder of the Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians.

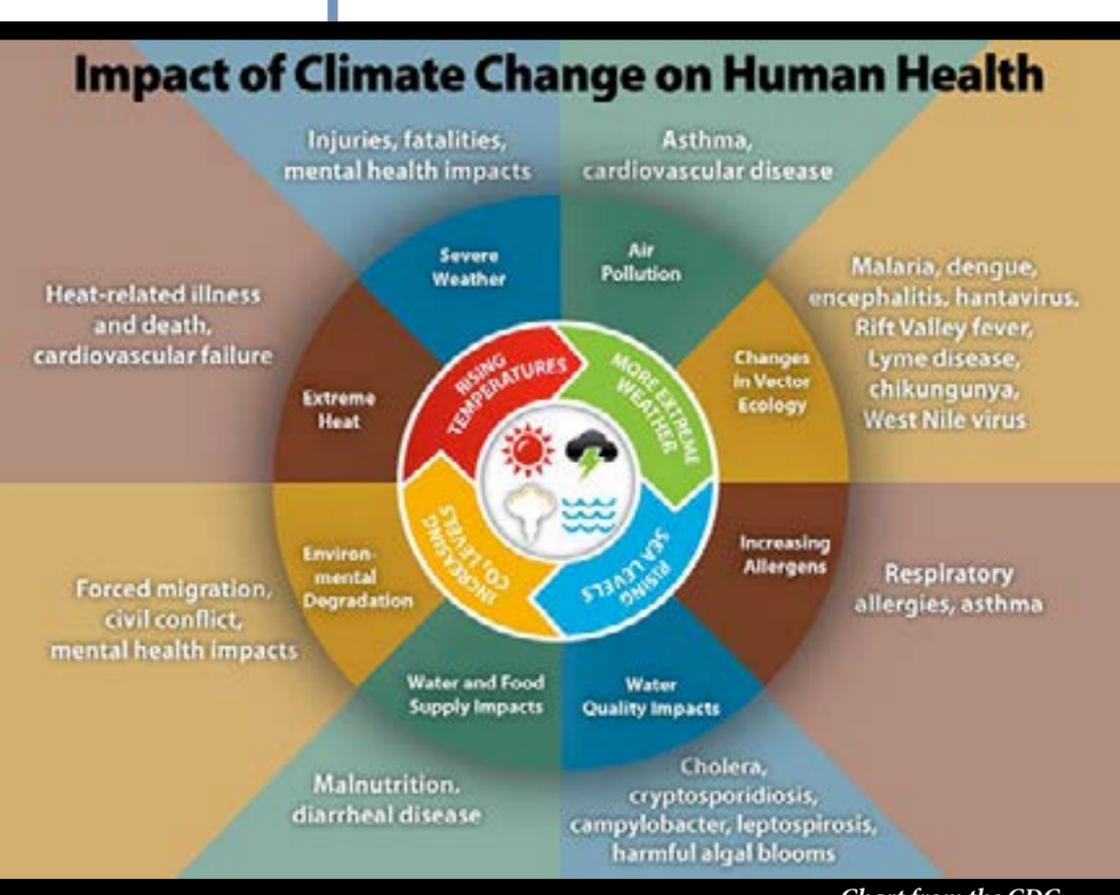


Chart from the CDC

Rising Anti-Semitism

The Demons Within

David K. Shipler

Anti-Semitic attacks have soared since the 2016 election.

On a December evening twenty-some years ago, Fern Amper, a Jewish resident of Teaneck, NJ, made a startling statement to a small group of Jews and African-Americans who gathered at her home periodically to discuss the issues of race, privilege, and bigotry. When the Jews spoke of anti-Semitism, the blacks mostly minimized it, preferring to see themselves as the country's primary victims of prejudice and picturing Jews—who were white, after all—as comfortably powerful.

So, to make her point about Jews' vulnerability, Amper claimed that they were always poised to flee. "I would venture to say that there's no Jew sitting in here—and I've never spoken to you about this—who does not have an up-to-date passport for yourself and your kids in your desk drawer," she declared. "Tell me if that's true."

"It's true," one said. "Absolutely," said another. "Absolutely," said all the Jews in the room.

The blacks were flabbergasted. "Why? Why?" asked Ray Kelly, an African-American. "Are you really serious with this paranoia?" A moment of silence followed, then a couple of voices said, "Yes."

If the scent of perpetual danger seemed exaggerated in the 1990s, it seems more warranted in the era of Donald Trump's

winks and nods to the neo-Nazis and white supremacists among us. It is no coincidence that since his election, anti-Semitic attacks, both physical and verbal, have soared, culminating in the mass murder of 11 Jewish worshippers in a Pittsburgh synagogue last Saturday.

As president, Trump has created an environment favorable to the undercurrent of anti-Semitism that American society has long harbored. It has surfaced dramatically since his election in 2016. The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups, counted a rise in the number of neo-Nazi organizations from 99 to 121 between 2016 and 2017. Murders by white supremacists have doubled, and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reports "a 258% increase in the number of white supremacist propaganda incidents on college campuses."

In addition, the ADL found that a 57% jump during 2017 in anti-Semitic incidents, defined as harassment, vandalism, and assault, was the largest one-year increase since the organization started keeping tallies in 1979. "Schools, from kindergarten through to high school, were the most common locations of anti-Semitic incidents," the ADL reported. Jewish journalists and critics of Trump have been flooded with online threats, anti-Semitic portrayals, and disinformation, according to a voluminous study by the ADL. [The study can be found online at <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/computational-propaganda-jewish-americans-and-the-2018-midterms-the-amplification>]

The demons of hatred have been unleashed. And they are inside our own borders, not outside—not outside in the trade practices or climate agreements or weapons pacts that Trump despises, and certainly not outside in the ragtag "convoy" of desperate, impoverished children, women, and men fleeing violence and poverty in Central America to seek refuge in the United States. The demons live inside our own fears, not fears of true threats but of the phantasmagoria conjured up by the master manipulator in the White House.

What measure of responsibility for the rise of anti-Semitism, among other forms of hatred, can be laid at the feet of Trump? Anti-Semitism has grown more virulent in Europe as well as in America.

Its ingredients have roots even earlier than the fabricated *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Prejudice masquerading as admiration for Jewish power has long contained encrypted

aversion: Some of the African-Americans at Fern Amper's house, for example, slid close to traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes by portraying Jews as controlling business and the media, and therefore as too influential to be at risk.

Trump has not stood up and attacked Jews *per se*, as he has journalists. He operates behind the cover of his daughter Ivanka, who converted to Judaism, and her Jewish husband, Jared Kushner. He wears the camouflage of a pro-Israel zealot and, for that, garners campaign money and support from right-wing American Jews such as Sheldon Adelson.

But Trump is *indirectly* responsible. He has denounced "globalists," which some white supremacists take as code for Jews, akin to the age-old libel "cosmopolitans." He recently called himself a "nationalist," bringing praise from the rightwing fringe. He buoyed the neo-Nazis who marched last year in Charlottesville, VA, chanting, "Jews Will Not Replace Us!" They included "some very fine people," Trump said afterwards. Supremacists have declared themselves emboldened by what they interpret as his implicit sympathy and endorsement.

Trump did not pull the trigger in the Pittsburgh synagogue. Yet his vicious attacks on immigrants as criminals who "invade our country" fed into the stated motive of the shooter, Robert Bowers, and informed the killer's vocabulary. Bowers cited the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, HIAS, which is under contract with the State Department to assist refugees entering the U.S.A. "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people," Bowers posted online shortly before taking his guns to the synagogue. "I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in."

That hard connection between Trump's rhetoric and the shooter's impetus has not deterred the president, who continues to inflame our fears against immigrants, awakening the lurking demons that now stride across this troubled land. ✪

The demons live inside our own fears.



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He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his book *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (Broadway Books, 1986; revised and updated, 2015).

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