

We gather on Holocaust Remembrance Day to honor the memory of approximately six million Jewish men, women, and children who were systematically persecuted and murdered during World War II by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

This was not random violence. It was a deliberate, bureaucratic, state-sponsored campaign, that unfolded over time through laws, institutions, and propaganda that normalized hatred and stripped people of their humanity long before lives were taken.

That history matters, not only because of what happened, but because of how it happened.

The Holocaust reminds us that the dangers of hate do not begin with violence. They begin slowly, and quietly, with language that divides, with moments when it feels easier to look away than to speak up. Fascism doesn't arrive overnight. It takes hold when we treat the dehumanization of others as someone else's issue, or when we convince ourselves that staying silent is the safer choice.

Holocaust Remembrance Day calls on us to understand this history so we can recognize its lessons in our own time.

Our own time. 2026. What have we learned? Antisemitism is palpable and strains of it come from both the right and the left of the political spectrum. The majority of American Jews are largely assimilated into the broader community. It has been noted that we are perhaps disproportionately represented at the highest levels across numerous sectors of society. Which draws attention for some reason. And many of us are comfortable in our

communities. We feel like we belong. We believe our friends and neighbors would stand up for us if our safety was threatened. Or . . . we want to believe that. We NEED to believe that.

But we know the German Jews believed that. Comfortable in the professional and academic class, economically secure and socially accepted, so many Jews remained in Germany long after the red flags were waving in their faces, because it was impossible to process that real harm was going to come to them. And I'm struggling today whether I'm exhibiting that same denial, wanting so much to believe what happened in

Germany in the 1930s couldn't happen here. Yet so much of what is happening in the U.S. in 2026 I would have sworn a decade ago could never happen here. A president who is barreling toward full authoritarian rule. Who has side lined the other branches of government designed to check and balance the power of the executive. Who has rendered a shared understanding of facts obsolete. But make no mistake – he did not do this alone. Our president wields the power he does because those around him are enabling the behavior. Because the news media is fragmented and partisan and no one believes

information that doesn't fit with their world view. Because members of the President's own party will not rein him in even as the policies they support at the President's direction cause irreparable harm to their own constituents. The marginalizing of the LGBTQ community, of immigrants, of Asians, Mexicans, African Americans, and Jews are all inroads to "othering" - and if people aren't like YOU, their lives don't have value. We've seen this before. Rabbi Sharon Brous was quoted in the Christian Science Monitor, saying: Antisemitism is always the canary in the coal mine for the evisceration of the

rights and dignity of all people. It's a problem that not only endangers Jews but endangers democracy.”

So today, let Holocaust Remembrance Day also serve as a warning – how much Antisemitism will the broader community tolerate, excuse, ignore or justify? And when should we all be seriously afraid? Will our history show a different outcome?

Jews cannot stop this steamrolling of our democracy and its attendant growing antisemitism. There aren't enough of us, though I imagine many of us are doing

everything we can to slow or stop that roll. It must be a collective effort which requires a collective understanding that the mistreatment and “othering” of minority populations ends up challenging the morality and stability of the majority. We must confront hate collectively. For those who aren’t targets today, please don’t think this isn’t your issue. I assure you, it is.

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge and honor the Holocaust survivors (who know better than anyone what wickedness human beings are capable of) and who have made Santa Clara County their home. Even as their

numbers continue to decrease with every passing year, their impact on our community remains profound. These survivors rebuilt their lives after unimaginable loss and horror and went on to contribute to their new communities as neighbors, educators, business owners, professionals, and advocates. Their presence among us has strengthened our community, and their stories remind us of both the cost of hatred and the power of resilience.

Here in Santa Clara County, I ask our entire population to stand with the Jewish community – as we should stand

with all others who experience discrimination, hatred and violence based on their identities - in rejecting antisemitism in all its forms, and to defending the dignity and humanity of every person.

I'd now like to invite the Jewish Family Services team to come up and receive this Proclamation signed by the entire Board of Supervisors recognizing Holocaust Remembrance Day.