

Unfortunately I am not able to attend the Oct. 3 meeting; I would like to express some of my views.

I retired two years ago from my position at Temple Sinai where I served as Education Director for 23 years. You would think that educated people such as school principals, superintendents, teachers, etc. would be mindful of and know about certain religious days even if it is not their religion.

We Jews recently celebrated Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for Jewish people. And yet, I still hear from parents, as I did EVERY year when I worked at Temple Sinai, that schools are holding picture day, field trips, sports team try-outs, play try-outs, etc. on that day. It is difficult enough for a child to be in the minority, and yet now they need to stand out even more by telling their parents they do not want to attend synagogue because they do not want to miss out. I find it very insensitive when a parent is told (as has happened NUMEROUS times over the years), "Your child can have his picture taken on make-up day" or worse, "How were we supposed to know?"

Why is it that IED includes every group except Jews?

In my capacity as Education Director I was invited to numerous schools around Vermont to talk about Judaism, its beliefs, practices, and history. The level of ignorance is astonishing.-- and not just among the students, but the teachers too. In one high school history class in which the students were learning about European history in the 14th, 15th & 16th centuries I asked what they knew about the Inquisition. Not a single hand went up. I asked the teacher if that was going to be taught. She replied that it wasn't part of the curriculum. One quarter of the Spanish population at the time was being forced to convert to Catholicism or face expulsion or death and this is not part of the curriculum? When this same topic came up in an adult education class I taught at the Temple one very nice Christian man was flabbergasted. He said, "I can't believe it! Didn't anyone do anything to stop this?" The Jews in the class rolled our collective eyes. And the answer was no, no one did anything to stop this.

I was in a Middle School several years ago and I asked if the students knew about The Holocaust. One kid raised his hand and said it had something to do with Hitler. I asked if they knew when it took place. Not one single student was able to even name the century in which the Holocaust occurred.

I've asked classes, both teens and adults, if they had heard about blood libels. They had not. I asked what they knew about Jews and usually the answers I received went something like this: They like money. They served as money-lenders or bankers. I asked them if they were aware that Jews were prevented from many professions, from owning land, from joining trade guilds, and that one of the few professions open to Jews was money-lending. They had not. I asked if they had heard of Passion Plays, pogroms, ghettos, and the list goes on and on.

Lately, with so much conflict in the Middle East and with a growing Muslim population, I have asked students (and some adults) who have criticized Israel's stance on Palestinian resettlement, if they were aware that around 900,000 Jews were forced to leave Muslim and Arab lands following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. They did not. Not only didn't the students know this, but the teachers didn't either.

Jewish history is world history. If we are not teaching our children this, they grow up to become ignorant, bigoted adults. There is too much of that in our country right now because of a lack of education. Education is the key to understanding how we got to be where we are now. If we don't know where we came from, if we do not understand each other's histories, how can we co-exist in the 21st Century and beyond?

If you haven't read Tara Westover's memoir, "Educated," I recommend this as a must-read for everyone. She details how ignorance shaped her family's views and how dangerous ignorance is.

Aside from our history of persecution, Jews also have a rich history of making the world a better place throughout history in the fields of science, medicine, education, the arts, and the humanities. And despite being only one-tenth of one percent of the world population Jews comprise 22 percent of the Nobel Laureates, despite being denied to top universities due to quotas or worse.

The increase in the number of antisemitic incidents, according to the [ADL Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#) 2022 is mind-boggling. To omit Jewish history from the State's curriculum would be a great disservice and only result in greater hate, misunderstanding, and ignorance. We have been excluded from the conversation for far too long. I urge you to include us.

Thank you,  
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