

The Hate Crimes workgroup of the department's Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee (DISC) is reaching out in response to the hate crime at a Hassidic Orthodox synagogue, the Chabad of Poway outside of San Diego, California. A gunman, who has been linked to an internet anti-Semitic manifesto and possibly to a recent arson incident at a Mosque, entered the synagogue yelling anti-Semitic slurs and opened fire with an A.R. 15-style gun. The shooting occurred on the Jewish Sabbath and on the last of the eight days of the Festival of Passover, a sacred holiday that commemorates Jewish freedom. The synagogue was crowded because some members had come to services for Yizkor, a memorial service for the deceased associated with major Jewish holidays. This horrific incident, which took place six months after the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh that killed 11 people, is another painful reminder that there are people in our midst who hate Jews. Recent FBI statistics reveal that Jews are the most frequently targeted group of religious-based hate crimes, accounting for 58.1% of religious-based hate crime incidents, and that since 2015 there has been an increase in hate crimes targeting Jews and Jewish institutions. It is devastating that another shooting, targeting a religious group has happened. This feels never ending; we have repeated grim reminders that hate knows no borders and threatens people of all religions and around the world. We all deserve to live in a country and world in which no one fears going to their place of worship and no one is targeted for practicing the tenets of their faith.

We join with members of the Chabad of Poway and the larger Jewish community in mourning the loss of Lori Gilbert Kaye, a 60-year-old woman killed by the gunman. She was at the synagogue to say Kaddish, the mourner's prayer, for her mother who had died in November. She has been portrayed as a Jewish heroine; she threw herself "in the path of the murderer's bullets to save the life of the rabbi" (Naftali Bennett, Israeli diaspora minister). A pioneering and founding member of the Chabad of Poway, she leaves behind her husband, a physician, and a 22-year-old daughter.

Our prayers and caring thoughts are offered to the three individuals who were wounded and their families:

- Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, aged 57, who tried to talk with the gunmen and who was then shot in the hand. Rabbi Goldstein continued to deliver his sermon after he was shot and injured; he called for unity, prayed for peace, and encouraged his congregants to remain strong. A husband and father of a recently married daughter, he will likely lose one of his fingers. Rabbi Goldstein, who founded the Chabad in 1986, recently, he spoke out articulately about the Christchurch shooting in New Zealand.
 - With what took place in New Zealand, it is our duty to recognize and be clear that this is an act of pure evil... Attacking innocent people is abhorrent! It is abhorrent when it is a Shul in Pittsburgh and it is abhorrent when it is in a Mosque in New Zealand! Every human being is created in the image of G-d. Human life is precious. Our prayers and thoughts are with New Zealand.
- Noya Dahan is a 9-year-old girl who was at Chabad of Poway with her two sisters and her uncle, Almog Peretz. She was injured by shrapnel in one leg and in the

face. Her family moved from Israel to the US eight years ago to find safety, after Noya's parents were injured by rockets. This shooting incident, combined with vandals previously tagging the family home with swastikas, have made Noya and her siblings question their safety.

- Almog Peretz is a 34-year-old man, who Noya Dahan's uncle. He was visiting his family from Israel for Passover. He was injured by shrapnel when trying to protect his niece and three other children from the gunmen. He later ran back into the Chabad to rescue another girl who was hiding.

Members of the DISC stand with the Jewish community against this act of hate and all anti-Semitism. We condemn religious hatred and will speak up to defeat all forms of it. We must ask ourselves as behavioral health professionals, how do we help people with hate in their hearts toward others because of what they believe? How do we proactively address the growing lack of tolerance? What positive role can we play in empowering people to forge positive relationships with neighbors across differences? How do we support calls for individuals of diverse faiths to partner in rejecting violence and the destructive narratives that drive wedges between people with different beliefs?

Our prayers and thoughts are with Rabbi Goldstein and members of the Chabad of Poway. We share your heartbreak and your hope. It is evident that Minoo Anvari, a member of the synagogue is accurate that the Chabad of Poway community is tight-knit, strong, and unbreakable.

As we encounter another instance in the epidemic of bigotry and intolerance, we have confidence in the human spirit of connectedness and desire for peace. We embrace one another and support our communities in creating a world free of hate and violence, one in which prejudice and hate are not minimized or tolerated. Today let us all commit to acts of compassion to nurture healing in others and in ourselves.

With Compassion,
DISC Members



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
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