

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN RABBI LISTFIELD AND HUNTSVILLE MAYOR TOMMY BATTLE

From: Stephen Listfield <slistfield@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 15, 2020 4:18 PM
To: Battle, Tommy <tommy.battle@huntsvilleal.gov>
Subject: Thank you again!

Dear Mayor Battle — Tommy if I may,

Last week's dual outrage against Etz Chayim and then Chabad has turned out to be an occasion for so many citizens of Huntsville to show the city at its best. From my home in Atlanta I have been speaking with many of my congregants, and one thing I have heard over and over is that you have stood in the forefront. As rabbi of Etz Chayim I thank you, along with every member of the congregation.

I've been musing on the fact that the people of Huntsville are facing two viruses: The new virus known as Covid-19, and the ancient virus known as anti-Semitism. Those two diseases are probably the newest and the oldest plagues known to mankind. But what they have in common is that they are both *viruses*. They spread. They spread imperceptibly, they spread when people are not careful or thoughtful, they spread when people ignore basic truths (the truth of hygiene in the first case and the truth of human connectedness in the latter case).

Like all viruses, these viruses mutate. We already see around the world that if people let their guard down over Covid, it will come back. It's no surprise to point out that for two millennia the very same has been the case with anti-Semitism.

These days, how does anyone know when they are safe from even the smallest microbe of Covid? In similar vein I say that we all have to be concerned with even the smallest microbe of prejudice, with the tiniest budding of bigotry. Any speck of racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and other diseased ways of thinking contains the possibility of ripening into words, and then into desecration, and then into violence. It's in the air! And so easily it spreads. And therefore hate and prejudice need to be stopped immediately.

Believe me, Mr. Mayor, I am NOT preaching to you!! Just as I called you a few moments ago to thank you, I am now writing to thank you. That's the sole purpose of my message. If I do allow myself to adumbrate my thoughts it's because I am a firm ally of yours and of all the good people in Huntsville in our determination to defeat the insidious virus that has reared its head in our city. The whole world is learning that any virus is too much virus. We salute you and stand with you in our determination to stamp out this latest eruption of virus in our midst.

Sincerely,
Stephen Listfield
Rabbi, Etz Chayim

On Apr 17, 2020, at 10:44 AM, Battle, Tommy <tommy.battle@huntsvilleal.gov> wrote:

Dear Rabbi-

The silent invisible 'killer' can be described as the virus and the smoldering discrimination depicted by these acts. It sounds like a good sermon to me. It's thought provoking- a lot of people with the virus are asymptomatic- a lot of people with prejudice of any kind are asymptomatic- they have the disease but don't recognize it. Some are just carriers- they never act overtly but by their silence the virus multiplies- another parallel.

Thank you for reaching out to me- I look forward to us being able to get together in better times. I appreciate what you do for our community. I wish you safe travels in your trips to and from Huntsville.

All the Best,

Tommy Battle
Mayor