

EXHIBIT Q

Opinion: Anti-Semitism has no home in New Jersey

Cory Booker and Josh Gottheimer

Published 12:00 p.m. ET Nov. 3, 2017 | Updated 1:14 p.m. ET Nov. 3, 2017



(Photo: Tom Nobile/NorthJersey.com file photo)

When it comes to confronting bias, prejudice and hate, there are two distinct sides: one of action and accountability and the other of inaction and complicity. As writer and activist Elie Wiesel once wrote, “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.” To remain silent in moments of injustice and in times of moral contest is not equivalent to neutrality, but of complicit approval. That’s why today, more than ever, we must be joining together as a state and in each of our communities to combat bias and prejudice.

We have seen in New Jersey what happens when hate manifests: communities fracture, kids are bullied in school and families are targeted because of what they look like, how they pray, how they speak, how they dress. We have seen nationally, notably in Charlottesville, Virginia, what happens when this hate goes unchecked – it is emboldened.

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New Jersey: [New Jersey sues Mahwah over eruv, alleging discriminatory ordinance against Orthodox Jews \(/story/news/new-jersey/2017/10/24/nj-sues-mahwah-alleging-discriminatory-ordinance-against-orthodox-jews-over-eruv/792345001/\)](/story/news/new-jersey/2017/10/24/nj-sues-mahwah-alleging-discriminatory-ordinance-against-orthodox-jews-over-eruv/792345001/)

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Change is never easy – and we get that. In America, we don’t always get to pick our neighbors. That’s what built our great American tapestry and had fueled our economic success. What matters most, however, is how we treat our neighbors – and, frankly, it’s how they treat our communities. It’s about mutual respect for our values, our parks, our schools, and our churches and temples.

Like many other minority communities in America, the American Jewish community has experienced a deeply disturbing uptick in acts of hate and prejudice this year. In the first four months of 2017, anti-Semitic hate crimes skyrocketed nationally by 86 percent, compared to last year. Earlier this spring, the Anti-Defamation League reported that New Jersey saw a 14 percent increase in anti-Semitic hate incidents over the course of just a year.

In New Jersey, we're seeing evidence of this unchecked hatred in the destruction of a Jewish symbol called the eruv in multiple towns in our state. Eruvs are sacred to the Orthodox Jewish community, providing a symbolic marker for Jews who observe the Sabbath. The creation of an eruv results in an area where during the holy days of rest, Jews can perform tasks like carrying groceries or rolling a baby carriage.



Sen. Cory Booker (Photo: Michael Karas/Northjersey.com file photo)

For Orthodox Jewish communities, these eruvs are often difficult to detect to the naked eye, and are ritually created by attaching a pipe to existing structures, such as a utility pole. Eruvs enable Orthodox Jews to fully participate in the larger, diverse communities they call home while still abiding by sacred religious directives.

Vandalizing these eruvs, most recently in Bergen County, isn't simply about destroying PVC piping attached to utility poles. Rather, it is an act designed to target and marginalize the Jewish community in several towns across our state. In fact, on Halloween students at Mahwah High School mockingly dressed up as an eruv and an Orthodox Jew. Is this really what we want to teach our children?



Rep. Josh Gottheimer (Photo: Amy Newman/NorthJersey.com)

As Americans, we have a responsibility not just to tolerate our neighbors of different religions, ethnicities and cultures, but to stand up for them and to stand by them. Today, it's the Jews, tomorrow it could be your community. It wasn't long ago that signs reading "No Irish need apply" littered our cities. The hatred and bigotry that has exposed itself here is an affront to our most closely held American values. Rather than ignore these attacks, we must work even harder to promote and uphold the values of inclusivity that are hallmarks of our nation and especially our beloved state.

The word eruv, when translated directly from Hebrew, actually means "blending" or "mixture." It is these qualities that make our state and our nation strong. We are enriched by the blending of cultures, religions and races that make our national tapestry rich and vibrant.

We all must speak up and speak out to say that hatred of any kind – and the indifference that enables it – do not, and will not, have a home in our New Jersey community.

Cory Booker, D-Newark, is the junior U.S. senator representing New Jersey. Josh Gottheimer, D-Wyckoff, represents the 5th congressional District.

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