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Realtors, Resistance, and White Roses

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Realtors, Resistance, and White Roses

Abstract

I remember driving to school with my mother, eyes wide. I thought, as we passed by buildings and stores and little cafes with seats outside, that the small suburban town we were driving through was beautiful.

And when I told my mom, she looked at me out of the corner of her eyes and told me:

“Did I ever tell you how Dad and I were going to move here?”

“Here?” I said. “No... I don’t think so.”

“We were looking at a house that we both liked, but when I asked the real estate agent about how I heard there was some anti-Semitism going around, you know what she said?”

“What?”

“She said ‘is that a good thing, or a bad thing?’”

[*excerpt*]

Keywords

Alt-Right, anti-Semitism, Christmas, Germany, Gettysburg College, history, Hitler, Holocaust, Homophobia, Islamophobia, Judaism, Nazi, Neo-Nazi, Passover, racism, sexism, World War II, Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Center for Public Service

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | History | Jewish Studies | Religion

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/surge) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

REALTORS, RESISTANCE, AND WHITE ROSES

December 7, 2016



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“What?”

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I’m not Jewish, but my father is. Many of my cousins and aunts and uncles are Jewish, and many of them are not. I’ve grown up going to Communion and Brises, Confirmations and Bat Mitzvahs. I’ve played ‘Where’s the Matzah’ on Passover and then waited for Santa Claus to come on Christmas Eve. I’ve looked at myself in the mirror and seen how my Jewish roots show through the tendrils of my curly hair, the shape of my nose, even the slope of my brow. And I’ve always felt *proud* of my heritage, never ashamed of it.

My father’s family was decimated in the Holocaust before the few who remained came to America in hopes of a new life. The Holocaust, which claimed nine of my great-grandma’s sisters and brothers, happened 70 years ago. The realtor’s question, however, was recent.

We cannot ignore the world we live in, and we cannot ignore the similarities between Trump’s rise to power and Hitler’s rise to power in Nazi Germany. In [1932](#), the Nazis won 37% of the vote and became the largest single

party represented in the German Parliament. Hitler was named Chancellor a year later. He came to power democratically, just as Trump has. And Hitler garnered support by telling the German people that he, and only he, could fix Germany's problems. This sounds disturbingly like Trump's repeated entreaty: "[trust me.](#)" Follow them, and only them, Hitler and Trump both said during their rise, and it will get better.

I've always been taught that the Holocaust happened because of one horrible human being and his followers who forced a country to submit to their will. But that's not true.

Six million Jews and [five million others](#) – Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, Roma Gypsies, disabled individuals – died in the Holocaust. They died in a genocide that Hitler and the Nazis planned and enacted. Yet despite the meticulous, disturbing detail with which Hitler concocted a plan to kill millions, the ultimate tragedy of the Holocaust is more nuanced. Hitler and his cronies didn't kill eleven million on their own. The Holocaust was committed by thousands of people who rode the political wave, scared of communism and frustrated by inflation and economic hardship that had been brought on by the First World War.

It was committed by people, like you and me, who often remain silent even when we know we should speak up, who look away instead of intervening.

It was committed by people like my parents' realtor, whose moral compass was easily redirected by the hope of getting a commission.

So, for me, the question isn't if Trump, Bannon and the rest of the newly appointed cabinet are Nazis, neo-Nazis or even similar to Nazis. The question is: will we acknowledge and resist it if they are?

I am worried about what our government has in store for us. In the first half of 2016 there was [a 45% increase of anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses](#) from the previous year, and [anti-Semitic attacks all around have increased](#) since the election as well. On November 20, the leader of the Alt-Right movement [cheered](#) Trump's win by literally ending a meeting with a Nazi salute and shouting "[Hail Trump!](#)" The audience shouted back.

Despite all of this, I am more concerned about how we, as individuals in this country, will react. I am more worried about whether or not we will choose to stand up and speak out against anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and Islamophobia – even if it means we might have to sacrifice personal gain in the process. I am fearful that we might choose to stay silent, and history will repeat itself.

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*The photo accompanying this post features Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl, and Christoph Probst. They headed the White Rose resistance movement, based in Munich, against Hitler and the Nazis. They distributed pamphlets to encourage Germans to oppose Hitler. All three were executed by the Nazis in 1943. You can learn more about their efforts [here](#).

<https://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2016/12/07/realtors-resistance-and-white-roses/>