



HMD09 Theme: STAND UP TO HATRED

Hate. We think we know it, but most of us will never face it. Hatred is a corrosive force, able to ruin lives, wreck co-operation, destroy communities, or races, or nations. It is present in small ways in daily life, but it is at its most lethal in prejudice, discrimination, racism, anti-Semitism and islamaphobia.

In this lethal form it was the driving force in Nazi Germany, in Pol Pot's Cambodia, in Rwanda in 100 days in 1994, in Bosnia and in other places at other times. And so it is in Darfur today. The past is powerful, from it we can learn to protect ourselves and our communities from the forces of hatred.

Britain today is not Nazi Germany, nor Cambodia, nor Bosnia at the time of genocide. But the evils of prejudice, discrimination and intolerance are still with us. We categorise, stereotype, discriminate, exclude, bully, persecute, attack - because of race, religion, disability, sexuality. We damage, and are damaged, as a result of our refusal to accept our common humanity.

Acts of hatred always involve making a choice. We choose to attack, to abuse, to exclude, to stand back and do nothing - or we choose to resist, to respect, to protect.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2009 (HMD09) challenges us all to **Stand Up To Hatred**. It urges all of us to look at our behaviour to others; to understand how hate is directed against different minorities in Britain today; to explore how each of us can help make our communities stronger and safer.

HMD09 is an opportunity to forge links across ALL the diverse strands of local community lives, to build understanding and to unite in a common cause.

Expressing Hatred

Germany between 1918 and 1932 was wracked by turmoil, civil wars, coups and endemic violence. It was rife with discrimination against Jews. Psychiatrists canvassed the ideas of forced sterilisation and euthanasia. During periods of economic crisis inmates of asylums and sanatoria were virtually starved and work was increasingly required as both 'therapy' and a reason for feeding.

So, the seeds of the rise of the Nazi Party were set. But that same German

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Government also liberalised the law and, for some of the communities soon to be targeted by the Nazi regime, this was a period of growth and cultural achievement. Many Jews played important roles in art, music, architecture and politics. Jewish politicians were members of the German government including Hugo Preuss, Minister of the Interior and Walter Rathenau. Despite homosexuality remaining illegal and arrests taking place, there was a distinctive gay scene in Berlin. The German Gay and Lesbian Community of the 1920s published newspapers, ran public education work and was active in political campaigning. Disabled and deaf people formed associations and in August 1932 the deaf community released a film entitled *Verkannte Menschen* (Misjudged People). Progressive trends in mental health treatment and care, although not dominant, began.

Diverse communities were developing their own culture and, at the same time, the Nazi Party was growing in popularity. In 1925 Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" was published laying out the ideology of racial supremacy. After the Nazis were elected in 1933 racist and anti-Semitic campaigns became widespread and theories of racial superiority were expressed in posters, newspapers, school and medical text books and even children's literature and games. Anti-Jewish propaganda became common. The hatreds which had previously been confined to speeches and political literature now became mainstream, with posters calling for the protection of racial purity.

The weekly newspaper *Der Sturmer* was best known for its anti-Semitic articles and cartoons, but also anti-Catholic and anti-Communist propaganda. Its popularity grew from 27,000 copies a week in 1927 to 480,000 copies a week in 1935. Hatred had become normal.

The Role of Law and the State

The laws and agencies of a nation can be used either to fan the flames of hatred and discrimination or to quench them and encourage equality, fair treatment and respect.

As soon as the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in 1933 legislation aimed at preserving racial purity and attacking those considered as "untermenschen" (sub-human) was passed. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 explicitly removed Jews from German citizenship and prevented marriage between Jews and non-Jews. These laws were also applied to Germany's Gypsy population. New laws allowing for the forced sterilisation of disabled and Black people were also introduced.

In Cambodia legislation was introduced to bring about the Khmer Rouge ideal of a one-class state. All religions were outlawed, banking, finance and currency were abolished and private property was confiscated. While the Interahamwe in Rwanda were not members of Government, the state-owned radio station broadcast encouragement and incitement to attack Tutsis. The US Government, and others, hold the Sudanese Government directly

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responsible for genocidal attacks in Darfur.

Since 1945, the idea that Governments have a duty to protect citizens against racism or discrimination has gathered force. After WW2, Britain played a key role in developing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since the late 60s there has been a slow process of progressive law reform, gradually affording rights and protections on the basis of gender, race, disability, sexuality, faith, and age.

In many countries, including the UK, laws exist making incitement and expression of hatred towards particular groups a "hate crime". This is any crime committed against a person, or property, that is motivated by hatred because of:

- Race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality or national origins
Religion
- Gender or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability

However, it was only in 1999, after years of struggle, that the Public Inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence finally brought to national consciousness the extent of institutional racism in the police and led to root and branch reform across the country.

The UK and Devolved Governments have indicated their intention to equalise the protection against hatreds offered to different groups and individuals. But many groups and communities in the UK still face prejudice, discrimination and exclusion, law or no law.

The Impact of Hate

Hate takes many forms, it can be specific, it can be based on experience, it can be felt and not acted on. It can be focussed against a group, it can be political, it can be racist, anti-Semitic or Islamophobic.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Britain live with hate activity, individuals are damaged by it and communities are scarred. Over the past five years:

- Johnny Delaney, a fifteen year old traveller from the North West of England was kicked to death - 2003.
- Kriss Donald was murdered in Glasgow by a gang looking to attack a white person - 2004.
- Brent Martin had severe learning disabilities and was killed in Sunderland - 2007.
- David Morley, a gay man was murdered in London - 2004.
- Anthony Walker was murdered in Merseyside for being Black - 2005. His killers spray painted Nazi symbols on local walls after the attack.

50,000 hate crimes were reported to the police in 2006, but estimates put the true figure closer to 260,000. 712 individual hate crimes take place every single day of the year. Every time a shop window is broken because of the nationality of the owner, every time graffiti is sprayed on a place of worship, every time someone is verbally abused for being different a hate crime has been committed.

Islamophobia is widely regarded as the most common form of religious and racial hatred in the UK today. The Community Security Trust records that anti-Semitic incidents have increased from 219 in 1997 to 594 in 2006. 1,097 Homophobic hate crimes were reported to the Metropolitan Police in 2007. 16% of disabled people in the Scottish Highlands reported that they had been physically abused because of their disability.

Political rhetoric has been used to highlight differences between different communities. Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968 is still referenced by anti-immigration campaigners 40 years on. Reaction to the Wolfenden Report's recommendations on decriminalisation homosexuality included newspapers claiming "Freeing adult males from any penalties could only succeed in intensifying and multiplying this form of depravity." Today newspapers and political parties continue to express views attacking travellers and campaigning against the building of mosques.

Laws do not have to be broken for hatred to be expressed. Often long before crimes occur and laws are broken, hatred has been allowed to flourish and discrimination against minorities has become normal.

Resistance

In Germany, Jews resisted the attempt to exterminate and, mostly, perished in the attempt. Groups such as the White Rose student group distributed political literature which challenged Nazi policies. Individual Jews joined partisan groups or fought in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Jehovah's Witnesses refused to renounce their faith despite the danger to themselves. Dutch Communists organised a strike to protest the treatment of Jews. To date 21,758 individuals have been recognised as "Righteous among the Nations" by Israel for risking their lives to rescue Jews.

In Rwanda, Tutsis were hidden by neighbours including Beata Uwazaninka who was shielded by a Muslim neighbour who refused to hand Beata to the Interahamwe despite the threats to his own family.

In the UK, we face a much less threatening and extreme time. But we can still challenge hatred, prejudice and discrimination. Stonewall was established by a number of gay and lesbian activists including Sir Ian McKellan who were campaigning against Section 28 - the only example of a post-war British government passing a law which did not in some way

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liberalise the rights of a minority. After the murder of Stephen Lawrence his mother Doreen campaigned to have the issue of institutionalised racism in British society recognised and tackled. Disabled activists and groups such as the Disabled People's Council have campaigned for equal employment rights.

Today in Britain we can all choose to **Stand Up To Hatred** and:

- Refuse to stand by and allow others to commit acts of hatred
- Recognise the language of hatred.
- Challenge newspapers and public figures when they are using the language of hatred.
- Stop using language which is discriminatory and stop others when we hear them doing the same.
- Recognise when hate crime is taking place and report it
- Recognise that a crime does not have to be committed for hatred to be expressed
- Learn from history that the ultimate result of unchecked and unchallenged hatred, prejudice, discrimination and racism is genocide.

On Holocaust Memorial Day 2009 make the choice to **Stand Up To Hatred**.